

THE
S C H O O L
F O R
H U S B A N D S.

VOLUME II.

LETTER XXXIII.

Lord CHARBURY to Mr. DASHWOOD.

THIS comes, my dear Dashwood, to invite you and your amiable Lucy to be present next Tuesday at the ceremony, which will almost deprive me of my being.—Why then, will you say, do you hurry it thus, as miss Lewson is but barely recovered.—To say the truth, as it *must* be, I wish it over: possibly, my mind may be more at ease, when all my hopes, which I, indeed, at first madly entertained, are cut off. I shall then be removed from the sight, and the conversation of this dear, charming, enchanting Bab, who every hour makes me repent of the step I am going to take. Besides, the consciousness of having done my duty, of having given ease, nay happiness, to an innocent, tender heart, will probably reconcile me to my fate.—This I am sure of, if I stay much longer here, I shall not have resolution to go through the ceremony abovementioned.—Let me have your best wishes to support me under a trial so very severe; let me also have your company for an additional encouragement.

Miss

Miss Grafton has just told me that she will dispatch a letter to Mrs. Dashwood, by the servant who brings you this: her lovely face is ever dressed in smiles, the strongest indications of a mind unruffled by disappointment.—May it ever be so—To see those whom we highly esteem happy, is the greatest felicity: and of that felicity I shall not be deprived by the possession of Constantia.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

Miss GRAFTON to Mrs. DASHWOOD.

I Write, my dear, in a great hurry, because I will not make lord Charbury's servant wait. You may imagine that I am assisting miss Lewson in giving orders about the necessary preparations. Tuesday next is fixed for the completion of her happiness. Most girls would be in a strange flutter upon such an occasion. *You*, I remember, though very tenderly attached to your Dashwood, were not a little agitated: but I see no fluttering emotions in her; she appears calm and satisfied, while my lord—I cannot account for his dejection—has a melancholy air—looks discomposed.—My father, who seems to have no relish for all this bustle, desires me to tell you that he expects you both before the appointed day.—How glad would he be to give me to Ash at the same time!—and the wretch looks as if he would be transported to receive me: but it is not in my power to oblige either the one or the other; and, to confess the truth, I am sorry for it. Tell Dashwood from me to bring you down in time, or I will not own him for my brother. Adieu.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXXV.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

IT is done, Cecilia !—I did not intend to say a syllable more ; but as you so peremptorily insist upon receiving a minute account of an event which has almost deprived poor Charbury of his life, I proceed to obey you.

I have not, indeed, seen many weddings, but I have heard of many women who were in tears, in fits, &c. upon such occasions. Yet I never heard of any man—I never saw any man so entirely disconcerted and agitated.—I scarce well know how to describe so uncommon, so unexpected a behaviour.—He came, by my father's invitation, to breakfast, and to fetch away his bride. Never did I behold a more elegant, nor a more pitiable figure. He was dressed to a charm ; but such a paleness overspread his fine face, and he was so totally dejected, that he looked more like a man going to his grave than to his wedding. Constantia, lovely as youth, beauty, innocence, and the simplicity of her dress could make her, blushed and smiled as he approached her.—He approached her with more resolution than his appearance at first promised ; and then looking attentively at your friend, bowed without speaking, hung his head and sighed.—I felt a sigh just rising, but *hem'd* a little, and stifled it at once.

VOL. II.

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After

After breakfast, during which nobody spoke but my father, Dashwood, and Lucy, and during which lord Charbury could not swallow a mouthful, we proceeded to church.

When the clergyman asked if there was any lawful impediment, Charbury shook in such a manner from head to foot, that he actually terrified me; and I began to fear that he never would be able to go through the ceremony.

Dashwood then said something to him softly: he recovered himself, and behaved tolerably well.—I confess, my dear, I could not help feeling for him.—What could have given him so much disquiet?—I looked upon him with the sincerest compassion; I could hardly refrain from tears.—He once cast his eyes on me, and threw them down hastily, while his charming face glowed like fire.—Why should he feel such strange emotions, my dear?—Lord bless me! I was so affected by them, that I am scarce come to myself yet; though I strive to conceal my feelings as much as possible.—I was afraid too that Ash, who was present, invited by my lord, saw more than I would have had him: he behaved, however, extremely well: he never behaved better in his life; he was really discreet.—But I have said nothing about the new lady Charbury all this time.—She was so full of her happiness, that she gave me not one anxious moment about her.

We were very elegantly entertained at Elm Park.—My sister was intreated by my lord to do the honours of the table. We returned home at an early hour, after having passed the day as well as we could.

Before

Before I left them, Constantia, I must still call her so, occasionally took me aside, and throwing her arms round my neck, thanked me for all my friendship, the continuance of which she very earnestly and not ungracefully intreated, and hoped she should have the happiness of seeing me frequently. My lord, who followed her, looked on her, while in the abovementioned attitude with unusual complacency, and most respectfully joined *his* intreaties to her Ladyship's; desiring me to honour them with my company as often as it would be agreeable to me. I thanked them both for their invitations, but shall make few visits to the Park.

In our way to this place, Ash took it into his head that I was melancholy—(I certainly was not merry)—and therefore strove to enliven me. Had I never known Charbury, perhaps I might have brought myself to endure *him*. But now it is all over—I will never think of any man again.—I sit by myself as much as I can, ruminating on what is past. I seem to have been in a dream.—One thing, however, gives me the sincerest satisfaction, that is, my sister's happiness. Dashwood's fondness for her increases, I think; she appears, at least, to be of *my* opinion; and I begin to hope I was mistaken about him.

My father is very much pleased with them; and lord Budworth, who is returned to our neighbourhood, and who, as well as Sir Robert, expresses the greatest joy at my sister's situation, has insisted on their spending a few days with him. Afterwards they are to come hither again. I don't think either of them has the least desire to leave us. My father, indeed is not very well.—The doctor

tells him that the disorder in his stomach will end in a fit of the gout, which will prevent my seeing you according to my promise.—Can't you leave your aunt to come to me ?

L E T T E R XXXVI.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to
Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

THERE will never, I fear, be any peace for me.—What delicious hours have I passed with my lovely Lucy in this charming retirement! —I had designed to continue here for some time ; but the restless jealousy of Die contrived to disturb my repose.—I have received no fewer than four letters since I have been here, filled with impatience at my absence.—Strange impatience ! after having been absent from her three times as long, not a quarter so much has been said about it. If I don't see her she will certainly expose me.—I have always dreaded the being exposed by her, and I am particularly alarmed just at this time, because her indiscreet behaviour may prove exceedingly detrimental to my wife. I must, therefore, leave a place where I pass so many happy days wandering with my dear girl by my side. I might, indeed, do as I have done before, come to town for a week, just to quiet this tormenting devil, and return again ; but I cannot think of leaving my Lucy. She now wants all my care and attendance ; and nothing shall be wanted that can in the least contribute to increase

increase the happiness of so amiable a girl, whose tenderness is as delicate as it is enchanting.

In Continuation.

H——ns ! how I have been alarmed ! I am not, indeed, *yet* easy, nor do I know -whether I shall ever be easy.

Imagining that I heard a noise in the next room, as if somebody was crying, I rose and went to see who was there. With no small surprize I beheld my dear Lucy, my wife, sitting with her head upon her hand, while tears rolled in large drops down her sweet face.

Terrified at seeing her in such a situation, I flew to her, and tenderly asked the meaning of her sorrow.

She started—a glow of crimson overspread her face.—She replied, with a faint voice, and a forced smile, “Nothing, Mr. Dashwood.”

“Nothing, my Lucy—said I, folding her in my arms—will my dearest girl attempt to persuade me that she weeps for nothing ?”—I saw plainly, at the same time, that she endeavoured to stifle something which gave her exquisite uneasiness, and which obstructed articulation.—Her bosom heaved violently, and she was more agitated than I had ever seen her.—I cannot describe what I felt on the occasion. Frequently have I been melted by this into—what I sometimes thought—an unmanly weakness; but here my sensibility was, in the highest degree, laudable, and I indulged it, by kissing those dear eyes, which almost blinded as they were with tears, still looked on me with pleasure—still did the dear creature smile on me in spite of her grief. Yet I could not with all my endear-

ments prevail on her to acquaint me with the cause of her torturing emotions; though I pressed her with an ardour and eagerness which I had never discovered before. I never, indeed, had any reason till then to make use of my eloquence in such a manner. I complained, though tenderly, of her want of confidence, and by so doing touched her. Finding that she could not get rid of me, she, at last, told me that she was often thrown into such fits of crying, by reading affecting passages in books, that she could not recover herself presently. A second blush crimsoned her beauteous face, while she with difficulty brought out those words; which made me, I declare, suspect a little the veracity of her confession.—However, I seemed willing to believe her; and after having dried her tears with my repeated kisses, made her promise not to read such books for the future, at least, not while her spirits were in so weak a state.—She then left me, and seemed to be glad, for the first time to be glad, to escap e from my fond arms.

You cannot imagine how this behaviour of her's has disconcerted, how much it has affected me.—Surely she has not heard any thing about Die.—I tremble with apprehension—always to be in fear of what I but too well deserve; what a life!—Should any discovery of this nature happen *now*, it may be fatal to my wife. However, I hope I have been terrifying myself too precipitately. I have watched her with the most affectionate solicitude.—Not a syllable has she dropped which gives me room to believe that she is acquainted with a connection, for which I so severely condemn myself, but to which

which I know not how to put an end.—I redouble my tenderness, for I feel myself more and more attached to her every hour : from whatever cause her sorrow proceeds, it has rendered it still dearer to my heart.—I can scarce bear her a single moment out of my sight.—I am always fancying, if she happens to look unusually serious, that she is ill, weary, or disturbed at something ; and fly to offer a thousand remedies, a thousand endearments, to relieve and to comfort her. She receives my endearments, with so much satisfaction, and with so much pleasure returns them, that I still hope nothing has yet transpired to give her any disquiet.—I am not, however, I cannot be a moment in security, while Die is thus envious of my Lucy, while her jealousy makes her wish to destroy our domestic felicity.

LETTER XXXVII.

From the same to the same.

ANOTHER letter from this horrid woman !—She swears she will be with me, if she does not see me in two days ; I must therefore decamp immediately. I have made an excuse to my wife for our departure, and shall take leave of my father to day. I would not expose my Lucy to an interview with this furious woman for millions.—You shall hear further from me when I am in London.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

From the same to the same.

I Positively suffer so much anxiety from my apprehension, lest Die should put her threats into execution, that I sometimes determine to confess all to my Lucy at once, who I believe will receive such a confession better than any woman in the world; and so have done with Die for ever.

I was so provoked at being hurried up to town, that my company did not afford my tormentress any great satisfaction when I called upon her; and I, indeed found none with *her* but in the caresses of my boy, as she wept, complained of my indifference, and upbraided me with my fondness for my wife all the time I staid. Over and over did she tell me that she knew I loved no woman but Lucy, and that the only way to cure me was to inform her what a wretch had married her—"she will then despise you, she will then hate you as much as she now loves you."

The dread of this information has, indeed, hitherto deterred me from acquainting Lucy with an attachment which grows every day more and more disagreeable to me.—Die sees plainly in my features the emotions of my heart; the truth is, I cannot conceal them. I pity *her*, but I cannot *feel* for her, as I do for my wife.—Yet give me leave, Mollyn, to say, this change does not proceed from fickleness.—Had Die's manners been as
engaging

engaging as Lucy's, I should not, I am persuaded, have preferred any other woman to *her*.—

We parted out of humour with each other; I can answer for myself; and *she* appeared to be, in the highest degree, dissatisfied.—My stay had been but short, and I don't know when I shall re-return to her; whether I shall ever return to her. She has not only squandered away the greatest part of the money I gave her for the cancelling of her debts, but has contracted new ones; so that if she goes on thus it will be impossible for me to supply her.—I wish I had not come to town.—The sweet retreat we left was more agreeable to my Lucy, and more eligible for her than the hurry and bustle of London: I have, therefore, hired a pleasant little house on the banks of the Thames for our retirement; there is a pretty garden belonging to it, which is terminated by the river: but it may, I think, be considerably improved. I shall also make the house itself more convenient; I have sent down workmen to it. Lucy and I go to-morrow to give orders; for I will make no alterations nor additions without consulting her, whose taste I consult, indeed, in every thing.

I am quite out of spirits. I shall be amused by scheming improvements; especially when I have the softest kindest friend always hanging on my arm, that ever man was blest with.

LETTER XXXIX.

From the same to the same.

Richmond.

WE have been here above a week. Never surely did a man pass his time more agreeably than *I* do with my dearest girl. Yet I thought it adviseable to let *Die* know, before I left London, where I was, lest she should come in person to find me out. Besides, I wanted to kiss my dear boy once more before I quitted him. Miss Bellers behaved with a coolness that I did not expect: however, whether it was real or assumed it gave me no trouble; I beheld her with a Stoical indifference. During my stay with her, I spent my time chiefly playing with Ned, who improves every hour.—What a charming little fellow he is! You would say so, Mostyn, were you to see him. Were he a year older I would insist on his going to school: he would then be weaned from his mother—not that he prefers *her* to *me*; but he is yet too young, I think.—I am afraid to trust him with her; any accident happening to him would almost render me distracted.—Even at this moment I long to see him.—I am astonished at the silence of his mother since I left her.

L E T-

L E T T E R XL.

From the same to the same.

THE uneasiness under which I labour is not to be described.—After having heard nothing from Die for ten days—(I truly rejoiced at her silence, though I wished to hear from my son)—I sent Hopkins to town with a civil enquiry after her health, strongly commanding him not to return without seeing my little Edward.

Imagine my distress when Hopkins told me at his return, that Miss Bellers, who was very well, refused to give any account of her son; and that he had made use of every artifice in his power to procure intelligence about him, but to no purpose.

Heartily vexed at this information, I sent him, back again directly with a note to Die, wherein I actually intreated her in the most submissive terms to let me know where the child was, and how he did.—In vain—she peremptorily refused to mention a word concerning him: she would not even condescend to write a line in answer to me.

Alarmed beyond expression at this unaccountable behaviour, I hurried to town, and in person begged, conjured her only to tell me where my boy was.

“Where you shall never see him—replied she—He is *my* child as well as *your’s*—I am not ashamed of him as *you* are, and will take care to place him out

out of the sight of his father, who is too proud to own him in public, though he pretends to be so fond of him in private."

Horrid insinuation!—I told her that so far from being ashamed of him, I gloried in him, and would when he was at a proper age, raise him to a station in which no person need scruple to acknowledge him for his child.

"Ay, that won't be until I am dead—said she—or, indeed, it will most probably not be at all; and therefore I will take care of him myself."

"You cannot reasonably imagine—replied I—that I mean, by desiring to see him, to oppose your doing any thing for his advantage: I would do every thing in my power to promote it; and cannot live deprived of the sight of my dearest boy."

"Now he is your dearest boy—said she—but when you have got another, you will soon forget *him*.—No, no, Dashwood, you can never love the child long, as you have lost all tenderness for his miserable mother."

"How unjustly you upbraid me—replied I.—Have I not done every thing within the reach of my abilities to convince you of my regard for you?"

No—said she, warmly—You have, on the contrary, done every thing which would, you know, give me the greatest uneasiness: you pretended, at first, that you married this woman for convenience, and promised you never would look upon her in any other light: but you have basely deceived me; you are grown quite fond of her; you know you
are:

are; you cannot deny it.—That cursed love of variety is woven into the constitution of every man, so that the newest object is always the most beloved, though she may be every way inferior to the old one.—How often have you sworn to be for ever true to me?—But your Lucy will be neglected by and by, as I am, for another.—*She*, seducing devil as she is *now*, will find you as false as hell, as I do.”

Seeing her beginning to rave, and knowing that the gentlest words would be thrown away upon her in her frantic fits, I left her to herself; nor did she attempt to detain me.—However, before I quitted the house, I closely interrogated the servants about my boy: but they either could not, or would not give me a satisfactory answer. I could only learn from them that she took him out one day in a chair with her, which she ordered to the Park; that she came home without him, and that he had not been seen or heard of since.

You cannot conceive, Mostyn, how this news disturbed me.—I went down in the evening to my wife, but was so restless and unhappy, that I could not stay at Richmond. I therefore hurried back to Die's again the next morning. I endeavoured to coax and flatter her into a good humour with me, hoping she would then be off her guard, and that I should find out what she had done with the child: but the artful creature was too cunning for me.—She seemed pleased with my caresses; yet whenever I mentioned my boy, she instantly began to talk of something else.

I asked her how she could make me so very unhappy as to deny me the sight of my child; telling her that she injured *him* also by depriving him of the affection which I wished to shew him.—I spoke to no purpose.—At last, being softened by my endearments, she told me, that if I would swear in the most solemn manner to love nobody but her, and to treat my wife with the most cutting indifference, she would fetch my child directly.

What an infernal proposal!—It made me shudder with horror; it filled me with something like aversion for the woman I had once loved: yet my ardent desire to see my boy made me try to make her more reasonable.—With all the composure, therefore, which I could assume, I asked her how she could pretend to love me, and, at the same time, insist upon my behaving in so injurious, in so unjust a manner, to a woman who, by her mild and rational conduct, is so deserving of my affection and esteem? “Were she—continued I—of the most malignant disposition, were she highly disagreeable in her person, I should act basely by breaking my marriage vow; but as she is so kind, so gentle, and so complying, as well as every way agreeable, I am doubly bound to keep it inviolate: inclination and duty equally urge me to treat her with the tenderness and the respect which she has merited from the first moment I became acquainted with her.”

“So then—replied she—I find it is as I said—(her features swelling with passion)—it is as I always thought: it is owing to your inclination

nation for this dawdle that you desert me, not from any regard to your ridiculous vow; for ridiculous, nay villainous is it, in the highest degree, to swear to become faithless and perjured; and to give up the mother of your only child for another woman.—How can you possibly be bound in a more firm manner to her than to me?—We freely agreed to be true to each other; *I* have most scrupulously kept my word; I have refused the most brilliant offers, because I would not leave my too lovely Dashwood: while *he* not only willingly quits me, but enters into what he calls solemn engagements, to forsake me.—What religion, what justice is there in such a proceeding!—I want to know, since your mouth is so opposite to your heart!—No, Dashwood, I am as much your wife in the eye of H——n, as if we had been before the priest together; though, to please *you*, I gave up all the privileges of one: but by that H——n whom I invoke to revenge me and my innocent child, unless you immediately treat me in the manner you did before you so scandalously left me for this inveigling Lucy, and leave *her* to pine as I have done, I will not only never let you see your boy again, but will render *her* for ever incapable of producing a son to rival him in your affection.—So take your choice, for upon my life it shall be as I have said.”

I cannot describe the fury which flashed in her eyes while she pronounced these alarming threats, which filled me at once with horror and indignation. Finding that I could no way bring her to reason but by making concessions unworthy of a

man of honour, unworthy, indeed, of a man of any humanity, I quitted her without making a reply, and returned to my wife.

I returned to my Lucy so tortured with reflections, and so full of terrifying apprehensions, that she directly asked me if I was ill.

“ I am very sure—added she, after I had several times told her that I was not ill—that something is the matter with you.”

Matter enough, indeed, to drive me mad; but I can't prevail on myself to let her know with what a fool, with what a villain she is connected, though I am unable to conceal the perturbation of my mind.—How amiably, how tenderly does the dear creature strive to sooth my soul to peace, and harmonize my distracted mind, more than ever distracted with the uncertainty of my poor Ned's fate.—Could I but once get sight of him, I would tear him from his mother at all events.—I am also rendered very uneasy in another shape: Die has been so very expensive to me, and I have lavished so many large sums upon her, that I find my wife's fortune, at least that part of it which I can come at, even with what my father made over to me on my marriage, quite insufficient to support Die in the extravagant style in which she chuses to live.—This disquietude, added to my other anxieties, almost deprives me of my reason.—Poor Lucy sees the agitation of my spirits, though she is ignorant of the cause of it. Hence arise pangs still more acute.—Into what unnecessary distresses have I involved myself!—I am very unhappy—the more so, because I am self-condemned.

Adieu.

E. D.

L E T T E R XLI.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

Grafton-House,

I Have not been right well since I came here, and the continued bustle we have been in has not made me better.—I kept my room when Lucy and Dashwood left us, to get rid of Ash; but it is impossible to get rid of him.—I wanted, however, chiefly to avoid going to see Constantia—Lady Charbury I should now say; and as I pleaded illness, my lord—I mean my lady—sent twice a day to know how I did. *Once*, my lord called himself; but I did not see him. Constantia I thought would have flown to her sick friend; but how fleeting is friendship, especially the friendship of women.—Yet let me not wrong my Constantia by this aspersions; she cannot, indeed, be affected by it, because she does not deserve it: nor can I suppose that lady Charbury has forgot Bab Grafton, or that she stays away either from pride or punctilio; but I believe she is so intoxicated with her happiness, that she thinks of no living creature in the world, except her Charbury.

Having at last recovered my spirits a little, I resolved to make my visits in form, and accordingly dressed myself, and went without sending. They were both at home. My lord flew to lead me in, and my lady was ready to devour me. My lord said but little; his eyes, however, talked a good deal: they looked full of a charming languor, which I strove *not* to see.—I could not get away till I had

promised them—I was engaged for the first three or four days they named, finding I would not fix upon one myself; but I could not be engaged for ever.

My lord led me back to the chariot. He sighed, I thought, when he left me; but I endeavoured not to hear his sighs.

When the day appointed came I sent a card to let them know that I was not well enough to keep my engagement, and my card contained half the truth. In the evening they both came to me. The servant told them that I was just gone into the garden for a little air.—The day had been uncommonly warm; I had passed the preceding night without much rest; and the stillness of the evening had thrown me into a kind of slumber in the rustic temple.—I started, on feeling somebody touch me.—Opening my eyes, I saw lord Charbury standing by me.—Imagine my surprize and confusion. He seemed to be embarrassed, and made an apology for his appearance, by saying, “Neither Constantia nor I could be easy without coming to enquire after you.”—He then stammered out something, which I did not understand. He looked, I thought; charmingly graceful, though rather melancholy.

As we went towards the house, he offered me his arm to support me: you may be sure I did not accept of it.

Lady Charbury ran to meet me, and expressed much concern at my indisposition, declaring, however, that she was glad I was able to go out.—Though I was, indeed, not fit to be seen, not having
left

left my room for the whole day till then.—But what signifies dress?—I have done with it.

They could not make me, with all their importunities, fix upon another day.—I pleaded want of health, and said I would wait on them as soon I was well.—By perseverance I got rid of them at last.—Lady Charbury seems to be—she *must* be the happiest of women.—But why is not he as happy?—She looked excessively pretty; and when he went to put her into the coach, she almost jumped into his arms, while he looked upon her—as indeed he ought to have looked—with a smile of satisfaction.—To do the discreet thing, I must, I fancy, keep out of my lord's way—I mean on my own account.—Ash, I believe, thinks with me—though he says nothing which can justify my being offended with him.—Actually I wish that I was heartily in love with him.

L E T T E R XLII.

LORD CHARBURY TO MR. DASHWOOD.

YOU desired me to let you know as soon as I became reconciled to matrimony, having once been, you candidly confessed, as averse to it yourself as I was; that is, averse to an alliance with the lady with whom you are now blest—I repeat your own words.—As to the state itself, I always preferred it to any other; but then I had hoped never to have been constrained.—Had I married the woman of my heart, Dashwood, I should be at this moment as blest you are.—I have the satisfaction,

tion, however, to tell you, that you did not speak too hastily when you said that I could not well be wretched with so amiable a young creature as Constantia. Amiable she certainly is in a high degree; and had I never conversed with miss Grafton, I should have been contented, I believe, with Constantia: but without ever feeling that ardent passion, with the pains and pleasures of which I am too well acquainted.—Yet is my wife young and handsome enough for any man; good-natured, complying, and fond of me to an excess; as a mere woman she has charms sufficient to excite the warmest admiration, and to raise the passion of love in a bosom far less amorous than mine: but I feel none of those delicious sensations, none of those inexpressible transports, which instantaneously throw my breast into a fluttering state whenever I behold miss Grafton.—What then became of me the other day, when I accidentally touched her.

“And how happened it that you never touched her before?”—Methinks I hear you say.

Why, to tell truth, my friend, I have a thousand times taken her soft, white hand in mine; nay I have kissed her, but never with the circumstances which I am going to relate, were my pleasures of any kind attended.

You must know ever since I have been married, I have endeavoured to avoid the sight of this enchanting Bab as much as possible; being determined to do the strictest justice to my wife, as well as to hinder myself from sighing after what I was never likely to obtain.—Miss Grafton, as if conscious of her own adorable attractions, and
fearful

fearful of increasing the tormenting flame which at this instant devours me, keeps herself at the greatest distance.—However, as she is the friend of my wife, the frequent exhibitions of her beauties before my eyes in a familiar way, cannot but make *some* impression upon me, as I am not one of your phlegmatic fellows, dead to female attractions, and destitute of sensibility.—I mean, indeed, to act with honour, but I cannot pretend to say how far I may be able to resist opportunity.—Happily I have acted hitherto with honour; but I have been *tried*, Dashwood.—My trial, I may add, has been a fiery one.

The indisposition of miss Grafton, which prevented her from coming to us as we expected, gave me so much anxiety, that I could not rest till I knew how she did; or, at least, till I heard a more particular account of her.—I therefore proposed to my wife to call at Grafton-house on the evening of the day she was to have spent with us.

On being told that she was in the garden, I ran thither, eagerly wishing to see how she really was with my own eyes; though I was strongly encouraged to hope that she was better, as she had quitted her chamber.

With my heart exceedingly agitated I entered the rustic temple, Constantia having staid in the parlour to ask Mrs. Ford some particulars about her friend's health.

The first object which struck me was the dear, lovely Bab herself, reclined on one of the sofas, asleep: her head resting upon her arm, and her fine bright hair hanging carelessly over her snowy forehead. Her cheeks were in the most beautiful
glow

glow to be conceived; I never saw her look half so handsome. I stopped at the sight of her in so inviting an attitude, and had not power to leave the place, though I was afraid even of breathing, lest I should disturb her.

While I stood thus lost in pleasure, gazing ardently on her, and utterly incapable of going either backwards or forwards, a large garden-fly came in at the window, and was just going to settle on the charming cheek which I had so much admired.

Alarmed lest the monstrous fly should hurt, or only frighten her, I made an effort to drive it away, and in so doing just touched the dear face which I had endeavoured to preserve uninjured.—My touch waked her: but happily, from her behaviour, I had no reason to believe that she knew she had been disturbed by me; and I declare I had not presence of mind enough to tell her on what account she had been awaked.—Transported as I was at the sight of her, however, I was also fearful of having too much fluttered her, and felt myself therefore more disconcerted than I had ever been in my life. She too, charming creature, appeared in confusion; but her confusion increased her natural loveliness. Yet, soon recovering, she asked me, with her accustomed vivacity, where lady Charbury was, and proposed going to meet her.—As I saw her look fatigued, I pressed her to accept of my arm.—She declined it, but with a smile which even made amends for her refusal.

My Constantia met her amiable friend, with a concern for the news about her illness, and a joy to find her better than she expected to see her,
which

which pleased me extremely; and I kissed her as soon as I got her in the coach, for the esteem and affection she had discovered for her dear miss Grafton; whom I must ever adore, though this pretty little creature gives me as much pleasure as she can in *her* way, and is a very good girl.---Indeed, I don't believe any other in the world would have succeeded half so well. 'Tis certainly impossible for a man, not entirely divested of humanity, to be always insensible to the caresses of a fine young girl, who spends every hour in her life in accommodating herself to his taste.---When I am disposed to be kind, with what tenderness does she shew the excessive satisfaction which my behaviour gives her! and when I am in a humour to be alone, I need only say, "Do, my dear Constantia, leave me to my book." Away she trips, without being in the least embarrassed, but returns and peeps in upon me now and then, without speaking, unless I call her: she then flies into my arms with as much delight, as if she had never been dismissed from them; sure indeed of being rewarded for her complaisance with a thousand endearments.

Thus you see I am neither happy nor unhappy; and yet I am both. ---How paradoxical am I?---However, while Bab remains unmarried I can make myself tolerably easy; and yet, how mean, how selfish is it to wish that she should pass her youth, the season for love, without tasting any of its pleasures, because she must not enjoy them with me.---I hate myself for being so absurd; though I am convinced, from my being utterly unable to stifle such a wish, how extremely I am,
notwith-

notwithstanding my marriage, attached to her.--- Love and reason, I see, are but too often at variance. How very happy are *you*, Dashwood, in finding them both unite to bless you in the arms of your amiable Lucy!

L E T T E R XLIII.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I AM still most unhappy, because I can get no intelligence about my boy. I cannot learn whither this woman has sent him.---Were it not for my Lucy I should actually run distracted.---I am, indeed, half out of my senses already.---I have been very much disordered with a feverish complaint, occasioned, I believe, by the agitation of my mind; but it has served to make me discover new perfections in my charming wife, new tenderness in every word and action.---How have I been indulged! with what extreme affection did she hang over me, while I was hardly able to lift my head from my pillow! with what anxious care did she endeavour to soothe my pain, to quiet my restlessness, and to lull me to sleep upon her dear soft bosom!---Never, surely, was a man so idolized by a woman.---Die loved me, I believe, exceedingly; but then she flew to excite and return my passion with an ardour equal to my own.---This dear angel seems to have no desires to gratify; no will on earth but mine: she is quite adorable; and could I but recover my boy, I swear solemnly I
would

would never see Die again. Were I to acquaint you with the numberless attentions of my dearest girl, I should fill a dozen sheets.—She enquires into the cause of my melancholy with a tender timidity, as if fearful of giving offence; and when I put her off, really ashamed to relate my follies, turns away from me, silently weeping.—Oh! God! how my heart is torn!—I run after, catch her to my bosom, and kiss away her tears. Her love is a remedy for every thing: but as I feel myself undeserving of it, my remorse is almost insupportable.

LETTER XLIV.

From the same to the same.

THIS creature's insolence will be hardly credited by you.—She has sent her *woman* after me even into the very presence of my wife.—S'death! her behaviour is not to be endured.

I had not been well, I told you.—Finding myself extremely low, but sufficiently recovered to leave my chamber, I walked with my Lucy in the garden. I walked with her till I was quite fatigued.—I then threw myself on a seat by her, resting my head on her lap.—Being more disordered in my mind than my body, I begged my dearest girl to sing and charm away my pain.—She instantly complied, and with the sweetest of all voices, rendered still more harmonious by the tender compassion which she felt for me, wrapped my soul in *elysium*.

While I was in this enraptured state, who should make her appearance before me but Ellis. Never was surprize, confusion, and anger, equal to mine; and they all co-operated at once to render me incapable of expressing my sensations on the very unexpected occasion. Anger, however, prevailing, gave me strength enough to recollect myself.—Starting up from my wife's lap, without even condescending to speak to Ellis, I called aloud for Hopkins.

Hopkins instantly appearing, I asked him how he dared to send any person into the garden, without first enquiring whether I chose to be seen; and with all the resolution I could muster up, added, “Whatever that person wants, take her into the house, and let her tell *you* her business.”

The manner in which I spoke was sufficient to let Ellis see that I would be obeyed.—She therefore, went with Hopkins, having first, however, looked very earnestly both at me and my wife, to whom I immediately complained of the impertinence of Hopkins; and in order to crush suspicions, which she might very rationally entertain, said, “This woman, I suppose, is somebody with whom he is connected, and I will go and enquire into the affair.”

What a scandalous evasion!—How despicably we act when we endeavour to make our servants appear guilty of faults which we have ourselves committed!—How does one folly draw us into another!

I scarce knew how Lucy took what I said to her! I could not stay to observe her behaviour.

Hurrying

Hurrying into the house, I asked Ellis what she meant by coming to me in that manner.

The deceitful hussey replied, "that her mistress had expressly commanded her to see me wherever I was; and to tell me that if I did not visit her as usual, she would come herself, and know the reason of my absence."

"The reason—said I—she well knows already: had she not kept me in ignorance about the child, she would have had no room to complain."

"Master is at home, Sir—said Ellis—my lady bid me tell you."—

"Do you then immediately go to her, and never let me see you here again upon any account whatever."

Flinging from her when I had uttered these words, I retired to my closet to consider what I should say to my Lucy; but I could not think of a better excuse than I had made before; an excuse which I was actually ashamed to repeat, and therefore said nothing at all.

The dear girl, who is, I believe, as unsuspecting as she is lovely, not once expressed the slightest curiosity about Ellis, though her horrid appearance prevented *me* from closing my eyes all night.

The next morning I went to Die; fully intending to chide her very severely for her imprudence, her insolence indeed; but she began first; and after having vented a torrent of abuse, the repetition of which would sul'y my paper, actually cursed *me*, my wife, Ned, herself, every thing; and with the bitterest execrations wished unnumbered evils on my head, only because I had laid it in the soft

lap of my angel, my Lucy.—What infernal beings do the most beautiful ones in the creation make themselves, when they give way to their anger and resentment !—In vain did I tell her that I had been much indisposed, that I was then very ill, and that the anxiety I felt about my boy, had made me wish to lay my head any where for a little rest.

“ Undoubtedly—said she—I wonder you did not lay it in her detestable bosom.—But this ridiculous excuse won’t go down with *me* ; you know yourself it is a villainous one : you know you love this woman, ay, deat upon her as you once did upon me ; and it was your love for her alone that made you so eager to marry ; though you framed so poor, so flimsy an apology for your conduct about your want of money.”

I positively assured her that my apology was the truth ; and that I should be in the greatest want of money again, did she not set some bounds to her expences.—Your extravagance—

“ Aye—replied she—it is all *my* extravagance to be sure.—H—ll seize you though, for laying the cause of my misery on me, when I have no hand in it.—Take back all that you have given me—continued she, putting her hand in her pocket, and throwing a purse at me—here, take back your picture too ; it is not like you ; it is not half so handsome as that which you gave your wife : but were it ten times more lovely than it is, I would scorn to keep the copy, without being possessed of the original.—No—I will have all or none.—There, Sir, (throwing it upon the ground, and stamping

stamping on it)—there—there—thus would I serve you and your wench, for she is nothing better: your vows, your love, your person, are all mine, though you have unjustly and cruelly given them to another: but by every thing that's dear to me, I swear you shall never enjoy that peace of mind of which you have deprived me, nor your idol neither—I will positively destroy her; since I find that you can only be hurt by her destruction. I'll make you both feel worse pangs than those of slighted love, if worse pangs can possibly be endured.”

A burst of tears gave here a momentary stop to her fury, and afforded me time to reflect upon the most likely means to sooth her: for when she is in these raging fits, there is no contending with them.—Opposition only adds violence to the storm.—At last it subsided.—I then, having yielded to it the more readily, as I earnestly longed to see my boy, who had not yet appeared, caught up my picture, the glass of which was broke in a thousand pieces; and with a look calculated, I thought, to touch her, said, “And is it thus, Die, you treat the resemblance of your once-loved Dashwood: indeed *him*—himself, by your cruelty, in depriving him of the sight of his dear child!—

“Oh! villain—dissembling villain!—replied she—can you again put on all that bewitching softness, which first seduced my too credulous heart, and made me as eager to adore as to be adored? Can I again be brought to listen to that sweet, deluding tongue!—to seek my happiness in those enchanting eyes!”—

“ You shall, I swear—replied I, taking her in my arms—you shall find all your happiness, if you will be but moderate and discreet, as I have often told you.”

“ And shall I again listen to you, you charming false one ?”—(half softened)—

“ Let me but see our boy, my Die—(forcing myself to embrace her)—and you shall be satisfied with me ; upon my life you shall.”

“ Yes—just when you are not in humour with your wife, you will, I suppose, come and fool away an hour with *me*, and then go and loll out the rest of the happy day in *her* lap.—Oh ! the very idea is not to be supported, Dashwood ; I will have you all, or none !”

“ But you give me no encouragement—said I—to be constant ; you will not let me have my Ned.—The sight of that pretty fellow would bind me to you more firmly than any thing upon earth could do.”

“ And so I must be obliged to that chit, after all, for your love, and not to any thing in myself ; though I am still allowed by all the men to be as handsome as ever.”

“ I shall allow you to be as handsome, aye handsomer, than ever, if you will produce my boy : as the sight of him, and my tenderness together, would brighten your features and complexion beyond expression.—Do, my dear Diana,” added I, still wheedling her.

She then laid her head languishingly on my shoulder, and bade Ellis fetch the boy.

Never

Never certainly was any transport equal to mine.—At the appearance of the dear little rogue, I almost threw his mother down in advancing to meet him, as he ran into my arms.—Nobody who has not been a father, Mostyn, can tell what a father feels upon such occasions. I thought I should never be able to let him go from me.—When I went to set him down the sweet child climbed up in my lap, and hung round my neck, so that his mother was absolutely excluded from any share in my caresses; though I saw pleasure dance in the cunning gipsy's eyes at my fond parental behaviour.

As soon as my first transports were over, I began to consider how I should get him from her; and being sufficiently assured that I could only gain my point by *address*, I pretended to be quite reconciled, to be quite charmed with *her* and her son.

Pleased with having seen my pretty Ned I returned, at last, to my Lucy; yet I was by no means satisfied with myself for being capable of deceiving two women, both of whom had given me so much delight; and particularly pitied my excellent wife, who has not hitherto furnished me with the smallest pretence to find fault with her.—With what sweet smiles did she receive me!—how anxiously did she enquire after my health!—how kindly did she propose unnumbered remedies for my relief!—None of her remedies will, I fear, prove efficacious.—Innocent herself, she little thinks of the pangs which *I* endure.—She cannot *feel* as *I feel*.—Oh! that my life had been as irreproachable as her's!

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

From the same to the same.

YOU advise me to pursue with spirit a design which I have long, you know, wished to execute.—I am still, however, lingering about it, because I cannot bring myself to be so well satisfied with regard to the rectitude of it, as you seem to be.—Were my boy out of the question, I should part with Die for ever without the least hesitation: but to deprive her entirely of her child would be, I imagine, to act unjustly.—Yet if the removal of my son from his mother would be advantageous to him, ought I to delay it a moment?—But when I have secured *him*, I shall not be able to venture to see *her*. To think how much *she* must suffer by such a separation tortures me extremely.—The moment this business is done I will return to Grafton House with my wife, and study to preserve her good opinion, and the regard of her family, with which I am at present, I believe, however, undeservedly, distinguished.—I must also strike upon a more frugal plan than that I at first set out with, as I have all the reason in the world to imagine that Lucy will be contented with it.—But I cannot let Die be distressed while I have money enough for her subsistence; to deprive her of her child will be to make her sufficiently unhappy.—I am going now to take all necessary measures for a proceeding, which will give me, perhaps, more pain than pleasure; but I cannot live any longer without my boy.

L E T-

L E T T E R XLVI.

From the same to the same.

I Have succeeded. Hopkins undertook to conduct the business with all the dispatch and secrecy which I required, and brought the dear boy to me while his mother was at Ranelagh.—She could go to Ranelagh without him, when she thought neither Lucy nor I would be there.—The sweet little fellow seemed transported to come to me.—Clasping me round the neck, he cried, “Now, papa, you will let me live with you?”—And indeed his request touched me so sensibly, that I did not know how to bring myself to part with him: however, I was obliged to send him from me for fear of a discovery on all sides; and therefore dispatched Hopkins with him to a brother of his, who is a taylor of some note, and a married man.—His wife is out of town for the air at a little village a few miles from London, with whom Ned is to be lodged, and kept as private as possible.—Die will be, I suppose, in a dreadful way when she misses her son; but while I have him safe under *my* care, I shall not mind her furious behaviour.

L E T T

L E T T E R XLVII.

From the same to the same.

WHAT a letter have I received from Die, accusing me of having stolen her son!— Though I do not find that she knows how the affair was managed, as Hopkins did not appear in it himself, but bribed the house-maid to bring the child to him in the Park, as soon as her mistress, Ellis, and the footman were gone to Ranelagh; and I have hired the girl to wait on Ned till he is fit to go to school.

This letter is very different from all the former ones I received from her; for though there are many severe passages in it, there are also paragraphs of the plaintive kind so affecting, that I cannot read them unmoved. She touches very tenderly upon our last meeting too; telling me that she had flattered herself, from my behaviour to her, that I had been concerned for having treated her so cruelly, and that she had begun to hope once more for a return of the passion, which had ever since our first acquaintance made all the happiness of her life; but that now finding herself again deceived, deceived in the most barbarous manner, and rendered completely miserable by the loss of her child, she felt herself unable to bear so terrible a blow; adding, that if I would not restore her son to her, she must take the best methods she could think of to recover him. “ In the first place I will advertise him in the public papers: if
I receive

I receive no satisfaction from *them*; if you persist in keeping me in ignorance with regard to my child, and refuse me the sight of him, I shall have recourse to measures less desirable than those which I have already mentioned."

Her letter, I confess, staggered me not a little; and I was almost tempted to go to her; but upon reflection I determined not to see her, lest she should by some artifice or other draw me to inform her where my boy was concealed. I therefore wrote an answer, in which I told her that I had taken away my son, because I thought it proper to place him where he might have an opportunity of learning something, as he now began to be of an age capable of receiving instruction.—“Knowing how unwilling you would be to part with him—added I—knowing how much concern you would naturally feel on the occasion, I acted, in *my* opinion, in the most eligible manner, and very much wish to hear of your being contented with what I have done.”

A very short answer was returned to me in the pathetic style:—the concluding words were, “I am extremely ill; I am weary of my life; weary of every thing, since I am deprived of my darling boy.”

I have heard nothing about her from that time; and am, therefore, preparing for Grafton House, and to give my wife an opportunity of enjoying that quiet, which is so necessary for her in her present condition; that quiet which cannot be had in town, or near it, unless you shut yourself up from all society.

L E T-

L E T T E R XLVIII.

Lord CHARBURY to Mr. DASHWOOD.

I Don't remember ever to have felt my mind in a more agitated state than it has been in during the last fortnight. Lady Charbury has been very ill. At the beginning of her disorder she found so strong a desire to send for miss Grafton, that she had written a card for that purpose, and was actually going to dispatch it, when I came in and saw it in her hand.—As she had no doubts concerning my entire approbation, she only just shewed her card to me, adding, that she was greatly indisposed, and wishing earnestly to have the pleasure of Bab's company, had pressed her so much to come, that she fully expected no denial.

I felt an uneasiness at this information, which I cannot describe. As I sat for some time looking on the card which I held in my hand without speaking, she began to discover that its contents were not at all agreeable to me.

“Sure—cried she, with a languishing tone—my dear lord, you cannot have any dislike to my amiable miss Grafton's company?”

This question made me colour—yet I affected to be displeased, and endeavoured to reason Constantia out of her fancy, telling her that I thought she would pay her friend a greater compliment by inviting her when she was well, and better able to entertain her.

“I will

“ I will gladly do every thing in my power to give miss Grafton pleasure when I am well : but I very much wish to see her now, because she is so chearful, and says so many kind things.—You know, my lord, how much good she did *you* when you was sick.”

I felt myself touched a second time on the recollection of Bab's charming officiousness about me, which made me think it highly improper to trust myself with her so near me again. I, therefore, began to convince lady Charbury of the impropriety of desiring her friend's company just now, assuring her that I would supply her place, and do whatever I could to make her easy.”

A few tender caresses put her by for the present; but as her disorder increased, and as her spirits became more and more depressed, she took it into her head that she should never recover.—She grew, indeed, so extremely unhappy for want of the sight of her friend, that I could not any longer refuse, though in doing so I should act directly in opposition to my judgment, to invite her.—I consented to write even a second card, dictated by Constantia : but I took care also to avoid it in such a manner that miss Grafton might only think we desired her company for a single day.—She even understood me still better ; for she made but a visit of a couple of hours, pleading Sir Robert's bad state of health. I only received her, and led her back to her carriage. I would not interrupt her visit to lady Charbury.

How lovely did she look ! how amiable was her behaviour ! how joyfully should I have supplied

Constantia's place when she threw her arms round her charming neck, and pressed her to her bosom in the warmth of friendship!—I even loved lady Charbury while I envied her, better than at any other time, for her esteem, for her fondness for this dear Bab. Glad was I, however, to see her depart, tho' I could have gazed on her for ever.

Luckily Constantia grew better, and luckily I was saved from being too near the woman on whom I cannot help doating, though I am convinced that I ought never to think of her again.—Be thankful Dashwood, that you in a marriage, not of your own seeking, find your happiness only in the *arms of your wife*.

L E T T E R XLIX.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

I Am going, my dear Cecilia, to consent to a measure, with which I have often thought, especially of late, that I never should be able to comply.—I have brought myself to think more favourably of Ash, and to wish I had a heart to give him.—Will you not infer from this declaration that I shall certainly give him my hand?—To tell you the truth, I found my head running too much upon Charbury for some time even after he was married, and irrecoverably lost to me; and therefore, out of prudence, deprived myself, in a great measure, of the innocent pleasure I should have enjoyed

joyed

joyed in seeing Constantia, because I would not put myself in his way.

Constantia, however, being taken ill, would not be satisfied, unless I came to see her. Accordingly a card was brought to me, written by my lord. You cannot conceive how the sight of the well known hand fluttered my foolish spirits, and made me sensible how very unfit I was to pay such a visit. Indeed I at first hesitated about it, and, almost determined to frame some excuse. Fearing, however, that if I refused, my lord might come himself to fetch me, I went.

He met me at the door with such looks of delight, and declared his gratitude to me in such strong terms for my regard for lady Charbury, while he led me to her chamber, that I did not, I doubt, behave with the reserve with which I had intended to appear.—Not that I would have you imagine I discovered any improper emotions: but I will honestly own I scarce knew how to conceal the satisfaction I felt at the sight of him. He looked, I thought, more amiable than ever, and there was an engaging softness in his manners, which touched me extremely. He left me, however, alone with my lady, who told me she felt herself revived at my presence, and complained, poor, innocent, unsuspecting girl, of my neglecting her very much since her marriage.

“As you are so happy with the man of your choice—said I—you cannot, I think, want the company of a third person.”

“I am, indeed, my dear miss Grafton—replied she—the happiest of women.—My lord treats me

with a tenderness which far exceeds my expectations: but do you know—added she, with a smile—that I want the company of so agreeable a friend as you are, who have been long acquainted with every movement of my heart, in order to talk about my lord to you, and to tell you the thousand kind things he does to make me happy.—In return, my dear, I will praise you as much to him.”

That will never do, thought I.

After having made her a little compliment upon her partiality in my favour, I said, “My father’s ill state of health prevents me from coming to you as often as I wish to see you; but my esteem and affection for you are as warm and as sincere as ever.”

She threw her arms round my neck to thank me. At that moment my lord entered the room. I broke from her, and looked very silly, I believe, as I saw an expression in his eyes, which ought not to have been in them, and which *my* appearance had occasioned.—He accompanied me to the chaise with emotions which he strove to stifle, but could not suppress; his hand trembled exceedingly, and he quitted me with a sigh which seemed to come from the bottom of a heart in the most agitated condition.

I can’t say that I felt myself right the whole day afterwards; and as Ash was very importunate in the evening, I almost thought it would be better to take *him* to drive the other more effectually out of my head. However I did not acquaint him with my sentiments you may be sure. I only treated him with more complaisance than usual,
by

by making no opposition to his repeated intreaties for my consent to the completion of his wishes. I sat, indeed, half stupid, and did not much attend to any thing: but when I retired to my apartment, I began to consider that people not entirely disagreeable to each other might be happy in the marriage state, and that a tender inclination on each side was by no means absolutely necessary.—Has not this assertion been strongly enforced by one who was certainly as great a master of the human heart as ever existed?—And does not the union between lord and lady Charbury give strength to it?—Lord Charbury was not, I have reason to believe, in the slightest degree in love with miss Lewson, and yet you see he behaves with a tenderness sufficient to make her contented with it.—Why then cannot I bring myself to treat Ash in the manner agreeable to his wishes?—Possibly his passion for *me* may, in time, kindle a passion in *my* bosom for *him*; at least, it is worthwhile to try. As all men are equally indifferent to me, I think I ought to determine in favour of the man who has, according to all appearance, suffered the most for me.

You are now well acquainted with my case.—Shall I take him, my Cecilia?—Answer this important question for me. I actually fear that I have not fortitude enough to enable me to determine for myself.—Be speedy in your reply; for you know,

“The woman who deliberates is lost.”

LETTER L.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I Have been exceedingly alarmed within these two days, by Hopkin's telling me that Die Bellers is actually lodged in a farm-house not half a mile from this place.—What a perpetual torment is this woman to me !—She sees that I wish to get rid of her quietly, but she will not fall in with my scheme ; she will, I fear, pursue me to destruction.—I live continually in dread of her indiscretion and folly, and tremble for my love, my Lucy, who grows every hour dearer and dearer to me.—Yet I sometimes think she looks melancholy, though she strives to put on a cheerfulness whenever I approach her, unless her tender concern for my anxiety, which I cannot hide, throws a gloom over her charming face.

I keep within the bounds of this spot as much as I can, being afraid of meeting with Die, who came here certainly with no other design but to be near me, to torture me to madness.—How entirely does she defeat her own schemes !—If she has any hopes of bringing me back, she will not by thus risking a discovery of herself, gain her point. Perhaps she thinks that by thus flying in my face she may frighten me into a good humour with her ; but she will be deceived.—I shall only let her see, however, that I dislike her being so near me, by a total neglect.—I have secured my boy.—In spite
of

of my other vexations the removal of *him* from her gives inexpressible ease to my mind.—If my wife gets over her lying-in as well as Ned's mother did, I shall be completely happy.

L E T T E R L I.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

YOUR advice with regard to Ash on his perpetual solicitations for my consent has been of much service to *him*. As to myself I remain as I was; not a bit better reconciled to a man who does his utmost to deserve me; so finding that I was less and less disposed to change my sentiments, I e'en told him plainly that I would endeavour to look upon him in the light he chose, but that I could not pretend to say whether I should ever be able to treat him in the manner he might wish for, and therefore desired him not to expect too much.—He seemed to be exceedingly transported at my consent; yet he endeavoured, I thought, to suppress his raptures, lest they should be disagreeable to me.—I was not, indeed, in a humour to listen to them, though I strove to appear satisfied with what I had done; and he behaved so well, that he really made me think it my duty to conquer my partiality for lord Charbury.—But I cannot yet bring myself to talk of him with the pleasure I could wish to do.—You must not expect me to say so much upon this subject as upon any other.

L E T-

—LETTER LH.

Lord CHARBURY to Mr. DASHWOOD.

WHEN you so obligingly called on me the other day, and expressed your surprize and concern at seeing me so seldom at Grafton House, it was not in my power to give you my reasons, because I was apprehensive that I might be interrupted by lady Charbury; I therefore chose to write, especially as I am going into Herefordshire for a few months.—Change of place may, possibly, be of some service to me, by driving the lovely miss Grafton's image from my mind; for here every spot forces me to think of her.—I had pleased myself with hoping that time, absence, and Constantia's endearments together, would have contributed to banish her from my memory, when lady Charbury, by insisting upon seeing her the other day, as she was so indisposed, awakened a passion, which had been, happily for me, slumbering in my breast; and since I have heard of her receiving the addresses of Ash, I have felt more uneasiness than I could have expected to feel. After all, how very little do we know ourselves, and to what purpose do we boast of our reason, as it is so insufficient to conduct us to happiness!—What is it to me to whom miss Grafton is married, if she is but married to a man capable of promoting her felicity, as Mr. Ash undoubtedly is in every respect. Were she to remain single she could never be mine. Ought I not then, if I really feel a tender passion for her, to rejoice at her approaching happiness?—'Tis too certain, however

ever, that I do not rejoice at it. — Envy and jealousy, which never invaded my bosom before, have now taken possession of it, and torture me severely; but I am determined to dethrone them as soon as possible.—I will try every method in my power to hinder my thoughts from dwelling upon what gives me so much pain, upon what makes me so thoroughly despicable in my own eyes. Have I not all the reason in the world to be satisfied with my lot? Is not my wife young, handsome, and entirely attached to me? Why then should I pine for another woman, who most probably would, were I this moment at liberty, reject me?—I must, I will get the better of this excessive weakness—Weakness is too soft a word—it is criminal now, on all accounts, to think any more of the dear, lovely Bab Grafton.—Adieu, therefore, my dear Dashwood; let me hear from you frequently; but if you wish me to enjoy any peace, forbear—pray forbear to mention your too amiable sister.

L E T T E R LIII.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

BLESS me, Cecilia! what an escape have I had! I almost tremble still to think of the danger I was in.—You know I had actually begun to make some progress in my endeavours to be satisfied with Ash.—I even looked upon him without abhorrence, and listened to him with a degree of patience at which I was myself surprized; but
he

he greatly merited my attention, I thought, as few men could have acquitted themselves with more propriety than he did on what you will allow to be rather a delicate occasion.

A few days ago I received the following letter by the Penny-post.

Mrs. ASH to Miss GRAFTON.

MADAM,

I Am reduced to the cruel necessity of divulging a secret, which must lessen the character of the man whom I have long truly loved: yet it is not with the least hope of recalling him to myself; nor do I expect to regain a heart, to which I once flattered myself I had several pretensions.—Our hands, however, madam, have been legally united.—Justice obliges me to give you this important information.—I was married at Oxford to William Ash, Esq; of the Dale in Dorsetshire. I should never, indeed, have discovered my marriage without my husband's permission, though I have indisputable proofs of it in my possession, had I not heard of his attachment to *you*. By concealing it any longer, especially from you, I should behave in a very criminal manner.

I am, Madam,

Your humble servant,

A. ASH.

The above letter astonished me, I confess, exceedingly, because I had all the reason in the world to believe that Ash was a man of character.—At first, indeed, I was inclined to imagine that some meddling

meddling person had endeavoured to make a difference between us, by accusing him of a piece of villainy of a very atrocious nature ; and as I thought it incumbent on me not to condemn him unheard, I gave him the letter.—I gave it him, and watched every movement of his features, desiring his perusal of it.

He read it with great perturbation ; he turned pale, and trembled to such a degree, that the letter fell from his hand to the floor.

As soon as he could recover himself a little, he said, with a faltering voice, “ The charge is but too true, madam ; I am undone for ever ; yet I am the more disquieted, because I must have appeared to you in the most scandalous light ; I must have appeared to you as the basest deceiver. But I swear by every thing most sacred, that I never had the least design to deceive you ; and if you will but permit me to relate my unfortunate story, you may think me entitled to your pity, though nothing more.”

“ Soon after my first going to Oxford, I was, in my rambles about the country, struck with the uncommon beauty of a young girl not many miles from the university.—She was the daughter of a farmer ; but she was as much superior to the other females in the village by her education as by her person.—Her person charmed my eyes, her innocence, modesty, and affection for me won my heart.—I seized every opportunity of seeing Nancy Trevor, and I thought of her too much, when absent from her, to enjoy any kind of satisfaction.—I must also, though to my shame, confess, that

as I believed, from the great difference in our situations, a legal union between us would be impracticable, I strove by every art I was master of to induce her to consent to my wishes without marriage, offering her a handsome allowance for the present, and promising to make a large settlement on her when I came of age.—She refused every thing of that kind, however, with a firmness which gave me the greatest disquietude, as I really was at that time extremely fond of her.—My fondness being increased by her resistance, became at length too violent to be endured; so that I found myself strongly impelled, by a passion which I could not possibly conquer, to marry her privately, as I knew that my father would never approve of such a step. So pleasing was her person, so winning were her manners, I thought myself for some time the happiest of men, and I never left her but with the greatest regret.—My frequent visits to London gave considerable interruptions to my happiness with her; but when I reflected upon my clandestine proceeding, fully assured that I never could prudently attempt to own her during my father's life, I was absolutely distressed; and I confess I began to repent of what I had done: yet, whenever I returned to Nancy, her beauty and her love fully reconciled me to my situation.—The last time I was at Oxford I found her father very ill, and a relation come from Ireland, who proposed to take her back with him to his mother and sister, on her father's death, till his affairs would permit him to return, and settle here. For a long time she
and

and I made strong objections; but mine growing insensibly weaker and weaker, she at last, though with the utmost reluctance, consented. — Soon afterwards I was pierced with the sincerest sorrow by the receipt of a letter from *that* relation, who informed me of her being drowned on going ashore. — However I became in a little while reconciled to the loss of her, by reflecting upon the ill consequences with which such a marriage with such a person might have been attended. — From that moment I looked upon myself as entirely at liberty to address whomsoever I liked best. — On my father's dying a short time afterwards I set out to make the tour of Europe. — I staid in France and in Italy longer than I had intended; but neither *abroad*, nor at my return, did I see any woman whom I could love seriously. — You were the first, miss Grafton, who made an impression upon me; and though I met with repeated refusals from you, I could not bring myself to withdraw my addresses, and to fix upon one more disposed to be kind. — Imagine then how sincerely I was transported when you so condescendingly permitted me to hope. — Yet I strove to restrain my transports, lest I should offend the only woman in the world whom I wished to please. — I had the satisfaction to find my behaviour agreeable to you. — What then can equal my present despair! — How shall I be able to relinquish a woman on whom my heart distractedly doats! — Yet believe me, miss Grafton, when I solemnly swear I never intended to deceive you, and that I am by this unex-

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pected discovery in the highest degree unhappy."

There is no describing, my dear, what I felt from the time of receiving Mrs. Ash's letter, to the conclusion of this *éclaircissement*, which gave me inexpressible relief.—I can no way make you sensible of my feelings.—I appeared to be just escaped from some imminent danger; dragged from the brink of a precipice.—In short, I had but just recovered, without knowing, however, what reply to make to Ash, who still looked extremely disconcerted, when he proceeded in the following manner: "You have not yet heard all, madam.—What I have to say will make me, it is true, appear more culpable, but I cannot be easy till I have made a full confession. I did myself receive a letter from my wife, in which she informed me, that though she had great reason to believe she was odious to me, she could not, when she heard of my going to be married to another, without acting very unjustly, refrain from endeavouring to prevent the execution of my design.—She then acquainted me that she had been partly confined by her relation, who wanted her to live with him as his mistress, and partly by a letter, which she had received from me soon after her landing in Ireland, wherein I assured her, that if she either wrote to me, or took the least step towards seeing me, or hearing from me, I would never suffer her to come again in my sight.—"Many cruel expressions (to repeat her own words) were added, which I declare almost broke my heart; but I resolved to obey, though at the
same

same time I made use of all my efforts to get out of the hands of my relation, and to come to England; I could not however succeed in a great while. At last, hearing upon enquiry that you was abroad, I went down into Buckinghamshire, where an old friend of my mother's permitted me to stay with her, till I could procure some intelligence about you."—She concluded with saying, that she had written to me on her arrival in England to let me know where she was.—Now I positively assure you, madam, that I never received a line from her, never heard a syllable about her till the day before yesterday.—The letter, of which I have communicated to you the principal contents, then came to my hands; and I will be honest enough to own that I was not willing to give credit to those contents, nor inclined, supposing the removal of my doubts, to resign the happiness I had so long sighed for, and which I was just going to enjoy.—But this letter addressed to you is decisive against me, and I must try to submit without murmuring to what I cannot prevent.—Yet I should have been miserable indeed, had I not had it in my power to convince you that I believed myself free from every kind of engagement when I offered you my heart—*that*, in spite of all other attachments, will remain your's and only your's."

I was really so much surprised at what I had heard, and so pleased to be decently disengaged from an affair into which I never heartily entered, that I could only advise him to return to his wife.—He accordingly took leave of me, though with much seeming reluctance, and many painful emo-

tions.—When I told my father all that had been related to me, softening matters, however, as well as I could, and adding how much reason I had to be thankful, he fell into a violent passion, and said, “The young fellows are grown so corrupt, that there are scarce any to be trusted: happy is he who has no daughter to marry; for it is fifty to one but he may dispose of her either to a rogue or to a fool: as to this fellow, with his clandestine marriage, he is both.”—I wonder my father was so furious, as I had had so narrow an escape.—Had I been *taken in* there would have been a very good excuse for his enraged behaviour. But there is no accounting for the oddities of some people.

L E T T E R L I V .

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

IF you are the sincere friend I have always taken you to be, let me see you immediately, though I breathe nothing but sorrow and despair.—My wife—my Lucy—my angel, lies at this instant dangerously ill of a fever.—That cursed Die has made an attempt upon her life.—I can add no more.—Come to me directly.—Hopkins will direct you to the most miserable of men.

L E T -

LETTER LV.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

Grafton-House.

INTO what confusion and distraction have we been thrown within these few hours!—What scenes of terror and despair have I beheld!—all arising from an astonishing and very unexpected event.—I will endeavour to give you a circumstantial account of the whole affair; though I have hardly recovered my senses, and can scarce hold my pen.

We were all walking in the Park yesterday in the evening.—My father, unfortunately for him, was with us.—He has not been able for a considerable time to get so far from the house; he could not have been so far from it in a more unlucky hour.—While he supported himself with his stick on one side, and availed himself of *my* arm on the other, Lucy followed us, leaning most affectionately on her husband's, who urged her with a thousand tender expressions to go home, thinking she had walked too long.

On a sudden we were alarmed by the firing of a pistol close by my sister, who screamed out, "Oh! my Dashwood! save my Dashwood!" and fainted.

He caught her in his arms, crying out for help.

At that instant we saw a female figure rush along the walk behind the trees, from whence the pistol had been discharged. Some men who had

been digging a pond at a little distance ran after her, overtook her, and brought her back.—Never had I seen such an object. Imagine one of the most lovely faces in the world; this moment pale as death through terror, the next flushed like crimson with rage and shame.—Dashwood having seated his wife on the grass, and supported her on his bosom, cast a look of horror and anguish at the beautiful fury, and exclaimed, “Infamous wretch! is it *you* who have dared to make an attack upon the life of the dearest, gentlest, best of creatures?”—pressing his lips to Lucy’s cold face.—“Speak to me, my angel, my love; tell me where you are hurt.”—Then turning to my father, “For Heaven’s sake, Sir---continued he---let that monster be secured, or there is no saying what mischief she may do.”

My father stood for some moments, like myself, stupified with wonder.—The lady then—for surely she was exceedingly like one, bating her furious behaviour—immediately cried, “You are right, Sir; I do intend to do every thing in my power to revenge the insolent contempt you have shewn for me, by preferring your *wife* to *me*; though you once swore that you never loved her; nay that she was your aversion, and that you married her merely for her money, by which you might be the better enabled to maintain *me* and my *child*.—You well know that I speak nothing but the truth, Dashwood; though you have not courage to own it before people who were not till now acquainted with your dissembling arts.”

During

During this speech, which was delivered with great rapidity, her face glowing with rage, and her fine black eyes darting fire, my father and I stood looking at her with amazement.

Dashwood, apprehending, I suppose, that my sister would be extremely shocked at so unexpected a discovery, and terrified to think of the consequences with which her fright would probably be attended, folded her close to his bosom, and said, "My dearest creature don't be alarmed.—I have not, I confess, been so unexceptionable in every respect as I ought to have been to deserve your love; yet believe me, my angel, I have never ceased to doat upon you; ever since the blessed hour which made you mine have I felt a warm increase of affection. But for God's sake—added he, looking on me and Sir Robert—let a surgeon be fetched instantly.—If my dear wife is not wounded by that devil—(fortunately the bullet had only grazed her hat)—it may be proper, at least, to bleed her?"

"Your wife—replied my father, with exquisite contempt—curst be the hour that gave my child to such a villain.—But yet, thank Heaven! she has a father to protect her innocence."

Here, partly by grief, partly by anger, his voice was stopped.—My sister, who had not yet spoke, raised her languid head from Dashwood's bosom, and said, "Oh, Sir! do not condemn him unheard; he has ever been good and kind to *me*.—Oh do not—do not reproach him."—She could not proceed.—Dashwood, indeed, would not suffer her; for, catching her again in his arms, he almost devoured

devoured her with kisses; thanked her over and over for condescending to plead for him; begged her to be composed, and intreated her to tell him whether she was hurt.—Assuring him she was not, she again laid her head gently on his bosom, without casting a look at her rival, without saying a word to her, while she was still held by two of the men, from whom she struggled to get loose.—Dashwood desired those men to secure her, till he had conveyed my sister home. When she saw him bestow so many endearments on his wife, she turned pale, and seemed as ready to faint as my sister had been.—My father called to her conductors, and bade them take care not to let her escape from them: telling them that they should be answerable for her, if he did not find her when he got to the house.

As soon as she was out of sight—for she made no resistance after those orders to the people who led her along—my father looked more than once at my sister with inexpressible grief in his countenance, and as often at Dashwood, with anger not to be described.—Then taking my sister hastily by the arm just as Dashwood had raised her from the ground—“Come away, come away—said he—fond, foolish girl, and learn to despise a man who has dared to use you in so scandalous a manner.”

Dashwood, tenderly receiving her again in his arms, into which she threw herself, weeping, replied, somewhat fiercely, “If she is *your* daughter, she is also *my* wife; and she has never received any scandalous treatment from me; I have ever loved her too fondly to merit such severe language from

from you.—Yet I will confess—added he, softening his voice, and speaking in that insinuating way, by which he wins all hearts—I have been to blame.—A man possessed of such an angel as your dear Lucy is, ought never to have exposed her to the ungovernable fury of so vile a wretch; but if you will indulge me with your attention, I am inclined to believe that I shall be able to remove a great part of your resentment against me.—I have certainly been much to blame, but never willingly, since I knew your charming daughter; and were it possible for you to conceive the misery which I have endured upon this occasion, you would, I am persuaded, rather look on me as an object deserving your pity, than your indignation.”

“I will hear none of this stuff—said my father, scarce able to articulate these words, so inflamed was he with passion—I know you are a scoundrel, and have ruined my child.”

“Nobody but the father of my Lucy would have presumed to call me so—replied Dashwood, with a becoming spirit—but there is nothing—added he—which I would not suffer for *her* dear sake, and for her sake alone—(seeing her pale, weeping, and trembling)—let me intreat you, Sir, to spare me a moment. Give me time to recover ---let me assist her in getting to the house, and then do with me what you please.”

My father was just going to return an answer, which certainly would only have made bad worse, when I interposed, and endeavoured to make him sensible of the necessity there was for rendering my sister as easy as possible, who, supported by Dash-
wood

wood and me, made a shift to walk feebly to the house. He obliged her to sit down twice by the way to rest her, and discovered a tenderness and anxiety about her beyond expression.

When they were near the door I went back to see if my father wanted any help.---I pitied him, indeed, excessively, though I thought he had been too hot.

“Dashwood---said he, immediately on my coming up to him, is the greatest of all rascals, and shall not sleep another night under *my* roof.”

“My dear Sir---replied I---my sister is too ill to be moved: besides, the shock will, I fear, prove fatal.”

“Oh she is lost---she is gone for ever.---But this villain shall not stay, shall not insult us, by triumphing over our misery.”

In vain did I strive to soften him in my brother's favour; for I really believe, Cecilia, and so I told my father, that never was there a man more fond of a woman than he was of my sister.---But he would not hear me; and though I informed him that I feared his resentment against Mr. Dashwood would affect her exceedingly in the condition she was in, he replied---“She may as well die in that way as be shot by his w---. However, whether she lives or dies, *he* shan't stay any longer here.”

Accordingly, when my sister was put to bed and blooded---the surgeon having assured us that she had received no hurt but what her fright and concern had occasioned---my father sent for Dashwood. He would have gone, indeed, directly into her

her chamber, had I not held him by the coat, and and begged him, on my knees, not to give her so much pain as to see the man whom she could not help loving, treated roughly. With much difficulty, however, I prevented him from going up, for he had got one foot upon the stairs.

Dashwood coming down, in consequence of the message I had dispatched to him, my father stopped, and with a faltering voice bade him leave the house instantly, and never see him again.

He started at this unexpected prohibition, and looked excessively disconcerted; but soon recovering himself, he said, with the most winning accents, "I willingly submit to your pleasure, dear Sir; but only consider, just now, the poor suffering angel above stairs---give yourself leave, Sir, to think a moment about her. She is *your* daughter, but she is *my* wife.---Any apparent remissness on *my* part, while she is in this affecting situation, may wound her peace more cruelly than any thing which has hitherto passed.---Suffer me, therefore, to attend her till she has got a little more strength, till she is a little more composed, and then I will do as you think best."

"Aye, that is, till you have wrought on her with your d---d dissembling tongue to believe every thing you have a mind to palm upon her for truth.---No, Sir, leave my house directly---I thought you had more spirit than to want bidding so often."

"When I consider what your Lucy endures, Sir---replied Dashwood, still humbling himself before

before my father; though I saw plainly how much his humility cost him, for he was pale and red by turns; bit his lips, and lifted up his fine eyes, from which the tears of resentment and tenderness seemed ready to start—when I think of your dear daughter, Sir, I am almost unmanned.”

“Why then—said my father, in a tone which made me tremble—I swear by H——n and earth, that if you do not go from hence immediately, you shall be forced from my door; I will no longer be insulted with the sight of the vile destroyer of my innocent child.”

“And I swear by the great G—d of H——n!—replied Dashwood, with all the spirit of an injured man sparkling in his eyes—that no human power shall compel me to leave my wife, whom I have sworn to love and to cherish in sickness and in health.”

“Then, by G—, answered my father, foaming with rage—you shall both turn out together; and if she will persist in quitting her father’s house to follow such a contemptible scoundrel, I swear by all that’s sacred I never more will look upon her as my child: nor shall she, though perishing with want, and in the extremity of wretchedness, have a single sixpence from me towards her relief.”

A deeper sigh now rent poor Dashwood’s bosom, who was, I think, a more pitiable object, at that time, than my sister.—After having struggled for some moments with his distracting emotions, he said, “You shall be obeyed, Sir; I cannot venture

venture to hazard my Lucy's life by removing her in her present condition.—Do *you*, my dear miss Grafton, my dear sister—continued he—I will from henceforward deserve the name of brother—Do *you* supply the place of her Dashwood to her.—Tell her that he will not be able to enjoy any rest till *she* is recovered, and believes him to be true to her alone; tell her that he would *now* have flown to her with all the eager haste of ardent love, had not Sir Robert's cruelty denied him that transporting satisfaction.—Oh! tell her, my good, kind friend, every thing that I would say myself, were I blessed enough to watch by her dear side, and to endeavour to compose her agitated mind, that the health of the best of women may not be entirely destroyed by her unhappiness.”

With these words, which were delivered in a tremulous voice, while tears rolled down his manly face, he pressed my hand, and departed from the house.

As soon as he was gone my father asked whither the vile creature was carried. On being told that she had been in fits in the back parlour ever since they had brought her to the house, in which a servant, who had waited on miss Bellers, had been endeavouring to recover her, he ordered her, before she was well come to herself, to be carried home, and strictly watched, that she might make no farther attempts upon *his* family.

I had now time to go up to my sister; but I must reserve my account of her for another letter, which you will, I believe, in a short time, have from

Your ever affectionate,

B. G.

L E T T E R LVI.

From the same to the same.

WHEN I entered Lucy's chamber I found her very ill indeed; yet the first question was, "Where is Mr. Dashwood?"—I sat down by her, and in the fewest words I could make use of (in the delivery of which I endeavoured to soften his harsh behaviour as well as I could) told her that my father would not, at present, suffer Mr. Dashwood to be with her.—My intelligence, in spite of all my caution, affected her too much. I therefore commended her Dashwood's carriage, which I really thought had been meritorious; for highly provoked as he was, he kept up a becoming dignity; and the tenderness which he discovered for his Lucy, made me compassionate him from my heart in his very trying situation.—In consequence of that compassion, and of my sincerest regard for my sister, I said every thing in my power to make *her* easy: but though she assumed a resigned air, I plainly perceived that she suffered extremely.—My apprehensions about her were well confirmed, for she miscarried before morning.

morning. The doctor, indeed, gives us hopes, but I own I think she is in a dangerous way.

Dashwood sends almost every half-hour to know how she does.—*His* messages seem to give her more pleasure than any thing.—I have received a long letter from him, in which there is a full account of his affair with this violent woman from the commencement of it.—I am to shew it to my sister as soon as she is able, in my opinion, to bear the emotions which it will probably excite in her.—The sweet boy we saw at Ranelagh was *his*; he has got him from miss Bellers, and imputes her late outrageous behaviour chiefly to the seizure of her son; *she* also is extremely ill at her lodgings.—Dashwood has taken an apartment quite on the other side of the country, though at about an equal distance from us.—He has sent a very submissive letter to my father; and two or three times a day dispatches the tenderest notes imaginable to Lucy; they have luckily a good effect on her.—I heartily wish that my father may be brought to relent, and to permit Dashwood to return to her.—Lord Budworth has been here; but my father would not receive him: his lordship therefore wrote to him.—But what apology, says Sir Robert, can be made for so inexcusable a conduct?—Certainly there is a great deal to be said against the first beginning of this unfortunate attachment; but at present, I think, my brother ought to be forgiven, as he discovers so much concern—sincere concern I will venture to add—for his foibles.—I begin, my dear, to

suspect every man of being guilty of *this particular foible*—you know what I mean, except lord Charbury; yet possibly it was the attachment to some favourite mistress which made him so loth to marry.—Bless me! what uncommon good fortune have I had!—How lucky was Mrs. Ash's letter to me!—The discovery produced by that letter, however, has been very detrimental to poor Dashwood; for my father now openly declares that there is not a young fellow in the three kingdoms worth hanging; and he still swears in the most tremendous manner that if my sister persists in desiring to live with her husband, he never will look on her again, nor own her for his child.—May H——n make him sensible of the cruelty of such a proceeding, and incline him to pardon Dashwood!—not only to pardon him, but to receive him as his son.—I wish most earnestly for a reconciliation, as well for my brother's as my sister's sake.—How few husbands, though ever so much to blame, would bear such treatment from the fathers of their wives!—Dashwood's submissive behaviour more than any thing convinces me of the sincerity of his affection for my dear Lucy.—She is just now waked out of a doze, into which she had happily fallen.—I must therefore lay down my pen, that I may go and administer to her all the comfort in my power.

LETTER

L E T T E R LVII.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I AM going to repeat my thanks for your late visit; never was there, my dear Mostyn, a visit better timed; the company of such a friend upon such an occasion is to be estimated in a particular manner.

My angel Lucy is out of danger; with a loss indeed which I cannot help lamenting; but most gratefully do I offer up my acknowledgments to heaven for her preservation.—'Tis very hard—'tis very hard to be denied the heart-felt satisfaction of seeing her, of watching by her side, and of giving her the strongest proofs of my unalterable tenderness; but as Sir Robert is so violently incensed against me, and as I do really think I in some measure deserve correction from him, I am the more ready to put up with his galling treatment; still more so on my dear Lucy's account, who must be a considerable sufferer in point of fortune, if I take her from her father.—No—I will not involve *her* in *my* ruin. As much as I languish for her sweet society, I will deprive myself of my soul's only joy rather than make her feel the weight of her father's displeasure.—Let *her* live in peace, in affluence under his paternal roof, while I, banished from all I love, comfort myself with the thoughts of having preferred *her* happiness to my own.

That abominable wretch—I cannot bring myself to write her detested name—has been delirious ever since; she was carried home yesterday.—She was undoubtedly out of her senses when she attempted to commit so horrid an action, the remembrance of which makes me, at this moment, shudder.

Yesterday she came to herself (but is still in a high fever) and confessed before Sir Robert, my father, and Mr. Goldsby, the acting justice here, whom Sir Robert took with him on purpose, every thing that has passed between her and me with much clearness, and in a concise manner; concluding in the following terms: “When I found that Mrs. Dashwood had entirely gained his affections from me, I was not a little mortified, chagrined, and provoked; but when he took away my boy from me, I grew quite desperate. In consequence of the various emotions, all of the torturing kind, which I felt, I took lodgings at a very retired farm-house in the neighbourhood, pretending to be a foreigner.—There I practised the firing of a pistol, ordering Ellis to tell the people that women abroad were accustomed to hunt with pistols, and that I had a mind to try if I could take aim at any small birds in the fields, in which I spent the greatest part of the day, when the weather was favourable.—As soon as I thought I was pretty expert in my exercise, I frequented Sir Robert’s Park, the avenues to which were never shut up but at particular times, and frequently saw Mrs. Dashwood, Miss Grafton, and Mr. Dashwood walking, but never could get near enough,

enough, for fear of being discovered, till the day on which I made my vile attempt. I was, however, so terrified, and so disconcerted, that I was hardly capable of executing my design, and it was undoubtedly my tremor which prevented the execution of it.—Weary of my own life without Mr. Dashwood, I wished to get rid of it; but I was also determined, smarting as I was under my severe disappointments, to destroy *her* first, who had occasioned them.”—What an inhuman monster!

My father, who communicated this account to me, told me also that when she had uttered the above words, she turned from them—being in bed—and could not be prevailed on to say more, though Mr. Goldsby made use of a great many sensible and pathetic remonstrances, to persuade her to repent of her past errors, and to preserve her life instead of destroying it—(she had made several attempts against it)—that she might have more time to prove the sincerity of her amendment, and to make herself worthy of pardon in the eye of the Father of Mercy.—As she would make no answer, they soon afterwards left her.

Deprived of the sight of my Lucy I am sufficiently unhappy; the behaviour of *her* father to *mine* has made me more so.—Their meeting at Miss Bellers’s was accidental; for Sir Robert not only refused to admit my father when he called on him, but was rude enough to return no answer to his letter.—He treated him like an utter stranger, though Mr. Goldsby, who is their common neighbour, strove to convince Sir Robert that he had
carried

carried things with too high a hand, by shewing a contempt for that good breeding which is due from one gentleman to another.—Lord Budworth is not surely to answer for the vices and follies of his son; he wants no addition to the disquietude which he feels on that son's account.—Thus you see, Mostyn, I receive severe chastizement from every quarter.—Certain am I that, tortured as my mind is at present, the remembrance of all my past unlawful pleasures is painful beyond expression—almost beyond endurance.—*One* satisfaction, however, is left for me—the safety of my boy; my poor dear Ned is not, thank God, in the hands of his horrid mother.—I sent Hopkins for him yesterday, as I intend to remain at this little dwelling.—I have agreed to take the apartment I occupy at present, by the month.—I *must* be near my Lucy.—May time and my sincere contrition soften Sir Robert in my favour!—I cannot bear the thoughts of taking her from her family, and by so doing, of depriving her of a child's right, an eldest daughter's right to his affection.—As to myself I could live happy in the most obscure, in the meanest cottage; but I must not be instrumental to her being reduced to so degrading, so undeserved a situation; what a situation for her who has been bred up in the midst of affluence, and who enjoyed the gratification of her excellent heart's every wish—before she knew me.

While I am thus circumstanced, Ned will help me to pass away my lonely hours, and save me from the horrors of despair.—The dear little fellow.

low seems overjoyed to be with me : it is, indeed, chiefly on *his* account that I refused to accept of my father's invitation ; who, though he has smartly and properly lectured me about my past conduct, has also treated me with lenity and compassion which increases my veneration, esteem, and love for him.—The mildness with which he delivered his reproofs, makes a deeper impression on me, than if he had assumed the sternness of an unforgiving parent ; and every gently correcting word went like an arrow to my heart.—Were all parents like lord Budworth, fewer sons would be forgetful of their filial duty.—But yet I cannot carry my boy to his house. There would be, I think, a want of decency in such a step at present, and it might render my lord liable to still grosser insults from Sir Robert, who does not act at all like a gentleman. However, as he is the father of my dear Lucy, my gentle amiable wife, I will spare him. Most probably his disregard of me and mine, arises entirely from his affection for this valuable daughter, who has been, he believes, injured, and who has, indeed, been much injured by me.—May she but recover, may she be at length restored to my longing arms, and every hour of my future life shall be spent in striving to deserve her love, and promote her felicity.

L E T T E R L V I I I .

From the same to the same.

MY dear creature is a vast deal better.—I have this moment received a long and most affectionate letter from her, in which she tells me that she will come to me as soon as she is able to leave her chamber, and share my fortune, whatever it be ; as she must, she says, be happier with me any where, than to live so cruelly separated from me.—I am going to give her my reasons for opposing so charming a condescension, unless Sir Robert's consent accompanies it, and then I shall receive her with the highest pleasure.

My father came in this morning, and caught me lying on the ground, playing with Ned, who was rolling over me.—Shall I confess, Mostyn, that I was ready, through false shame, to send my boy away ?—But my father perceiving my design, called the child to him, and asked him whose boy he was.

“ My papa's,” replied he, smiling.

“ And who is your papa ?”

“ My dear Dashwood,” cried he, getting up in my lap, and taking me round my neck.

“ How now, you young rogue—said my lord—has your father taught you no more respect for him ?”

The poor child coloured, and indeed so did I ; for he had been used to hear his mother call me so, and therefore knew no better.

My

My lord pitied us; for he turned from us, and wiped his eyes.—Then calling the child to him, asked him what book he was in.

My little Ned was again at a loss; for his mother never had any idea of teaching him to read herself, nor would she ever suffer any body else to instruct him.—And you may be sure I had something else to do, when I visited her, than to play the part of a school-master.—As the poor child, therefore, was quite a blameless object, I interposed to save him from confusion, and told my lord that he had never learnt his letters.

“ Fye, Dashwood—said my father—how could you bear to see your child so neglected?—Here, my pretty fellow—continued he—here is some money for you; when you can read like a man I will give you more.”

The child smiled on him, took the guinea, which he held out to him, and running to *me* with it, said, “ Here, papa, if you will shew me how to read I will give it to *you*, for then I shall get more.”

I could not stand it, Frank.—Tears rushed into my eyes, and I clasped the dear, sensible, neglected innocent to my bosom.—Mean while my father hurried out of the house.—As soon as I recovered myself, I began to teach my son to spell.—The inclosed is a copy of the letter which I have sent to my wife.

L E T-

LETTER LIX.

Mr. DASHWOOD to Mrs. DASHWOOD.

WHAT transport, my ever dear Lucy, did I receive from your affectionate letter, and how often did I pour forth my fervent thanksgivings for your recovery, while I kissed the dear paper which so amply confirmed it; for surely, my love, you must be quite well, or you could not have thought of leaving your father's house; but on no account shall you quit it without *his* approbation; you shall not expose yourself to his resentment for *my* sake.—I am very undeserving of such a proof of your affection; rather let me spend my lonely hours in penitence for my past errors, and in wishing I had merited the regard you have ever shewn for me, than draw you into difficulties, and tear you from the bosom of a father whose joy you have always been, and who may, by and by perhaps, be convinced of the sincerity of my repentance, and wish as earnestly as we do ourselves, to see us reunited.—Let not my dearest girl imagine that I do not most ardently long to have her with me, because I cannot bear to think of her injuring herself on *my* account.—Severe have been my sufferings during your illness, and most eagerly would I fly to your arms this moment, could I fly to them with prudence.—Nothing can equal the satisfaction I feel at your recovery; and your dear society would fill my fond breast with raptures inexpressible.—The raptures which I have felt, I still fervently hope to feel again, when the storm which has cruelly

elly divided us is blown over.—I should be supremely happy to see myself received again as usual by my Lucy's family, when they are satisfied about my reformation; but I should also be extremely pained to find *her*, from her attachment to *one* so undeserving of her love, slighted and neglected by her father, and in consequence of *his* disregard treated with coldness by every body.—No, my sweet girl, never can I support such a mortifying change.—It would, indeed, so perpetually distress my mind, that I should be truly miserable.—The remembrance too of what my Lucy had done for her Dashwood, who can never be happy without the certainty of being beloved by her with a tenderness equal to his own, might, perhaps, weaken her sensations in his favour.—Be assured, my amiable wife, I write not in this manner, in order to conceal a growing inclination for the company of any other woman.—Yourself only can ever engage my attention.—If you distrust me, Lucy, you may easily have your doubts concerning my sincerity removed, by employing whom ever you please to watch my every motion.—But how can I imagine that suspicion even insinuates herself into so faithful, so generous a bosom!—No, my angel, as you never suspected me when my behaviour was but two censurable and unguarded, you will, I am sure, think me now as innocent as I really declare myself to be; you will consequently believe that I spend my tedious hours, absent from all I love, in wishing for happier days; in sighing to fold my life, my every thing dear to me, in my doating arms;

and to give her the strongest assurances in my power that she is dearer than ever to her

Eternally faithful

DASHWOOD.

P. S. Whatever warm expressions your father may make use of, my dearest, with regard to me, do not seem to be hurt by them; let them not give you any disturbance. I shall not be less worthy of your esteem for his injurious opinion of me: but I may render myself much more so by my submission and respect.—Consider he is your *father*, my Lucy; he has ever been, and is still very kind and indulgent to you; he has been affronted by me, though, perhaps, not so grossly as he imagines; for I never saw *that* wretched woman, after I began to love *you*, without the greatest regret; and had it not been for the poor child, who innocently suffers for *my* folly, I never would have seen her again.—I did not behold her again when I had got away my boy from her.—By taking away my son I have made her desperate.—If she recovers, therefore, she will, probably, wreak her revenge against us both in a new shape.—Be upon your guard, then, my angel; and, for my sake, do all you can to preserve a life infinitely dearer to me than my own.—These are the terrors which now alone disturb me; and they are sometimes so violent that I am almost distracted by them.—Once more, my Lucy, take the utmost care of yourself, if you have the least tenderness for your Dashwood.

L E T-

L E T T E R L X.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

MY sister's health is quite re-established; I wish I could add that her mind was at ease; but my father still remains inflexibly averse to a reconciliation with Dashwood; he will not even hear him named. This unrelenting behaviour of his cuts poor Lucy to the heart, who is doatingly fond of him, and scarce knows how to bear his absence.—She would willingly have left my father, and have gone to her husband—(and I should not have blamed such a step if she had taken it)—but he will not, from a point of delicacy, permit her to carry so undutiful a design into execution. He cannot endure the thoughts of her lessening herself in her father's eyes, nor of her risking the loss of his affection for *him*.—Sir Robert grows, I think, more and more inveterate against his son, who has really behaved unexceptionably since the late unhappy event; and, by what I can learn, he behaved so a long time before.—Lucy calls me—I will conclude by and by.

In Continuation.

Bless me, my dear! My sister has been with me, all in tears, to tell me that my father, having caught her writing to Dashwood, threatened to turn her out of doors, if she persisted in corresponding with him.—She declares she would gladly take him at his word to be at liberty to go to her husband, did not that husband's intreaties, added to her father's horrid asseverations, make her de-

firous of staying where she was, and of endeavouring to wait with patience for the arrival of happier days.—While I was making use of all my efforts to comfort her, a servant came in a hurry from lord Charbury—(I thought he was in Herefordshire)—begging me to come away immediately, if I would see his lady alive, who had been hurt by a fall down stairs, lay dangerously ill, and called every moment for me.—He added that they had not been returned two days, that my lord was just going to see Mr. Dashwood, when my lady running after him to speak to him, fell by the slipping of her foot.—There are no hopes of her recovery, I find.

L E T T E R L X I.

From the same to the same.

POOOR lady Charbury is no more.—I have hardly strength or spirits left to relate the melancholy scene—but I will try, for I can think of nothing else.

I stepped into the chariot the moment it was ready, about twelve o'clock, and was soon whirled into the court-yard at Elm-Park.—I was soon too at the top of the stairs; but I trembled so that I could hardly support myself.

When the servant opened the door I saw the poor unfortunate young creature hastening to her dissolution, the approaches of which were strongly painted in her face.—My lord was sitting upon the bed, holding one of her hands, while she stretched out the other to me, but could not speak.—For my part I was as unable to articulate a syllable.

My

My lord bowed, and said, in a faltering voice, "You are very good, miss Grafton."—He seemed to be violently agitated, and frequently put his poor Constantia's hand to his lips, while *she* fixed her dying eyes alternately on us both; only saying, in accents hardly intelligible, "I die contented, since I see my dear, dear lord, and my friend near me.—Oh! my dear miss Grafton—continued she—say and do what you can to comfort my lord."

I hung my head, and blushed excessively; I could only press her poor cold hand in return.

Raising herself as well as she could in her weak condition, she threw her arms round her Charbury's neck, and cried, "Farewell for ever, my dear lord.—May Heaven bless you for all your goodness to your Constantia."—Then, sinking upon her pillow, she expired without a single groan.

I cannot tell you what passed immediately.—I sat quite stupified in my chair, equally unable to speak or to stir.—I was, at last, roused by some drops administered to me by my lord, who gave me his hand to lead me into another room.—Neither of us, however, spoke for some time.—Recovering himself, at length, a little, he made a confused kind of an apology for having sent for me in so abrupt a manner, and for having exposed me to so terrible a shock.—"But I could not—I could not—added he—behold the poor creature drawing towards the end of her existence, without giving her the satisfaction which she so earnestly desired.—You were ever most affectionately regarded by her, madam, and she never forgot her obligations to you.—May I venture to hope that you will ho-

nour *me* with the friendship with which you made my amiable Constantia so happy?"

I bowed a reply, and instantly gave a turn to the conversation, by asking particulars concerning the dreadful accident. My lord's information was pretty much like that which I had received from his servant; he only added, that he feared her death was hastened by her pregnancy.

I then rose to go.—He led me to the carriage, and opened his mouth several times to speak, but closed it again, without uttering a word.—He looked exceedingly distressed, and my silly heart sighed to relieve him, while my tears flowed for the poor young creature, who had been so precipitately snatched from all her joys in the bloom and pride of youth. How fleeting, how precarious is every thing in this world!—I really have, of late, met with so many disgusting occurrences, that I am almost weary of my life.—My spirits are so fatigued, I cannot, possibly, proceed.

L E T T E R LXII.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

OH, my friend! my Mostyn, never was there so happy a fellow as your Dashwood.--- I have thousand things to communicate which have given me pleasure; but an unexpected interview with Lucy has filled me with joy unutterable.--- In the first place, however, let me tell you that I became more easy by hearing that Die had left this
part

part of the country.--- Her fever falling upon her spirits she was judged to be in a decline, and is gone, by her physician's order, to Bristol, to try the waters of the salutary spring there ; but though there can be no hopes of her returning alive, I will not---I cannot---say that I felt any satisfaction upon the occasion. I could not hear of the probably approaching death of a poor creature, who had so often made me happy, and to whose misery I believed myself accessory, without considerable emotions of the compassionating kind. While I eagerly kissed her charming boy, tears of contrition and anguish rushed into my eyes, and watered his innocent face. The sweet child wiped them away with his pretty hands, and said, " Don't cry, my dear papa ; your little Ned will always love you dearly." Setting down the affecting prattler I bade him go and amuse himself ; but he could nether mind his play nor any thing else till I grew less disturbed.---By reflection I soon came to myself, and I found my heart lighter than ever, when I considered that my dear wife would not be thrown again into a dangerous situation by miss Bellers's outrageous behaviour.---How cruelly have I been alarmed since the vile attempt with the pistol !

In the evening I took a walk with my boy, in order to reward him for his affection for me.---Before I was aware my feet brought me to Sir Robert's Park ; the gate for foot passengers was open. Ned, with all the curiosity of a child of *his* age, ran in, crying, " Here is a pretty place, papa."---I called him back, but he ran on ; I then pursued him that I might bring him away. At a little distance I saw my Lucy.---H---ns ! how my heart bounded

bounded with delight. I longed to approach her, but was afraid, not knowing if she would approve of my advancing.—I therefore stood still, waiting for her coming nearer to me.—I then called the boy, who was jumping in the grass, and loudly, rather angrily, bade him come out; but the heedless little rogue did not mind me.—At that instant, Lucy, hearing my voice, stepped hastily forwards to me. My love then overcame my fear.—I flew to her, and with a sigh, which only breathed my name, she flung herself into my arms. Oh, G—d! what transport! what ecstasy!—I scarce knew what I said or did; but clasping her close to my bosom almost devoured her with eager kisses, rapidly repeated.—Raising her languid head, she again reclined it on my shoulder; and then throwing her snowy arms round my neck, cried, “My life, my soul, my Dashwood.”—“My love, my angel,” I replied—I could say no more.

We continued in this attitude, embracing, and embraced, till Ned, having lost me, ran up to me, screaming, “Papa! papa!”—I started at being so saluted at so improper a time, and turned fiercely to chide him.—“Don’t speak harshly to him—said my adorable Lucy---is he not yours?”---Stooping down immediately, “Come hither my love,” continued she.

The poor boy stood abashed, colouring, and looking first at her, and then on me.

Charmed with her sweet condescension, I said to him, “Why don’t you go to the lady?”

The child, having only waited for *my* leave, flew into her arms, open to receive him, and she pressed him, happy rogue, to her delicious bosom.

“Will

“ Will you be *my* boy, my dear---said she, with her sweet enchanting voice---shall I be your mama ?”

“ Yes, madam---replied Ned---if you please.”

“ Pretty fellow---said the dear girl, kissing him---ask your papa to let you be mine.”

He then ran to me, and I led him back, but could not speak; her angelic behaviour had almost deprived me of my senses.---She caught him in her arms, and looking at us both, said, “ What a picture of my Dashwood !”

“ Set him down, my dearest creature---answered I---he is too heavy for you; I hope we shall have many such resemblances. Yet what do I not deserve for having occasioned our present disappointment.”

She blushed, and taking hold of my hand, told me she was quite happy in being with me.---We then walked forward, and talked over our situation, while Ned took possession of one of the flaps of my coat.

When I had a thousand times expressed the transports which I felt on seeing her, and on enjoying her charming conversation again, I repeatedly persuaded her not to add fuel to Sir Robert's resentment on *my* account.—After having mutually protested to be eternally faithful to each other, and to love each other to the last moments of our lives, we thought it prudent to separate, lest we should be discovered; not without promising, however, to meet again in the same place the following evening. Lucy again kissed my boy, and told him that she would bring some cakes to him.

Before

Before I tore myself away from her she acquainted me with lady Charbury's death.—The next morning I received a card from his lordship, in which he earnestly desired to see me, as he could not properly make me a visit, according to his intentions.

I called on him.—He kept me a great while, talking of Bab, with whom, I find, he is still more enamoured than ever; but he insists upon my not discovering his sentiments about her, at least not yet.—He was exceedingly friendly, made me an offer of his house, and even very much pressed me to stay with him then, and to send for my little Ned, being, he added, very fond of children. He spoke very handsomely of his wife, and with a great deal of concern about her; saying, that the manner and suddenness of her death had shocked him prodigiously.—He appeared, however, not a little pleased to find that my sister was not going to be married to Mr. Ash.

The promised hour approaches.—I should be in the Park long before the appointed time, to contemplate upon my yesterday's exquisite felicity.

L E T T E R LXIII.

From the same to the same.

MORE raptures!—Nothing *but* rapture, my friend, can arise from a conversation with the most enchanting of women.—I had wandered, however, above an hour, I believe, before the

the dear girl appeared, and then saw her hurrying, almost out of breath.

She began with an apology for having made me wait.—I stopped her charming mouth with kisses, and led her to a mossy seat, but would not let her speak, till she had a little recovered herself.—I was contented with the thousand dimpling smiles which played about her sweet face, while she listened to the tenderest effusions that ever issued from a transported heart, intoxicated with its happiness. Yet I could not help sighing to see her look so pale, after the illness which I had brought upon her. I sighed, though her paleness, indeed, gave a new delicacy to her elegant complexion; but nothing could equal the richness of that complexion, whenever the praises which I lavished on her threw her fine face into a glow.—With what ardor did I press her beautifully turned fingers to my lips; I could hardly bear to part with her sweet hands, while I gazed on her most expressive countenance, and every now and then kissed her auburn locks, blown by the evening breeze over her lovely forehead.

While I was in this manner delightfully employed, she told me she could repeat her visits to me every day, as her father had the gout flying about him, but chiefly in his feet, and could not walk so far, at present.—She then enquired after my little boy.—I informed her that I had left him safe with Hopkins; upon which she gave me some sweetmeats for him, and desired me to bring him to her the next time I came. Dear, good creature!—Where is there a wife who would, in
similar

similar circumstances, be so kind, so condescending, so forgiving? But this is not all—I never shall, I believe, know half her worth.

The mention of my boy naturally led to a conversation about him; and in speaking of *him* it was almost impossible not to take some notice of his detested mother. — Like a fool, willing to make myself appear in a meritorious light, the better to deserve such an angel, I began to plume myself upon my discretion, which had prevented her from ever receiving any uneasiness on *my* account, or from entertaining suspicions about my conduct.

“ I have been long acquainted with your attachment to miss Bellers, said she, looking full in my face with a most bewitching smile.

“ How,” replied I, disconcerted and surprized.

“ It is very true — continued she — my dear Dashwood. — Miss Bellers herself, in a letter to me here, after lord Charbury’s marriage, discovered the whole affair.”

“ H——n’s! — cried I, and had you patience, had you consideration enough to keep the contents of her letter to yourself?”

“ Yes, my love — replied she, with a smile — I did not communicate them to a living creature, not even to my dear Bab.”

“ Then you are indeed an angel,” cried I, turning from her, quite ashamed of myself, and abashed, from a consciousness of her superiority.

“ Nay, do not praise me for my behaviour; it has merited no encomiums, for I will own now that it cost me a great deal to conceal the emotions
which

which I felt upon the occasion.—You had, indeed, almost found me out once.”

She then told me that she had just read Die's letter when I surprised her in tears; and with so much earnestness urged her to discover the cause of them.

Poor, dear, amiable sufferer! my heart bleeds this moment, to think of what she has endured for *my* sake.

I could not help pouring forth execrations against the wretched Bellers; severely reproaching myself, at the same time, for not having acquainted her with my unfortunate attachment.

Laying her soft white hand on my mouth, she bade me spare an unhappy woman, whose greatest misery must have arisen, after the loss of virtue, from the loss of *me*.

I swear, Mostyn, her noble behaviour almost deprived me of speech and motion.—My head dropped on her shoulder, while she threw her arm round me, and pressed me to her lovely bosom.—Till that ecstatic moment I had looked on her as something more than mortal; but the delicious sensations thrilling thro' my veins on being so affectionately encircled, convinced me sufficiently that she was indeed a woman as beautiful as she was good.

As soon as I recovered myself a little, I asked her to let me see the vile letter, which could not but have given her considerable uneasiness.

She assured me that she had burnt it directly; and that she would not have pained me with the contents of it for the world.

Were all wives like mine, Mostyn, marriage would be indeed a blessed state; a heaven on earth.

I sat, for some time, buried in astonishment, lost in silent adoration, forgetting every thing.—At last, catching her again in my arms, I found her cloaths damp with the evening dew. I rose instantly, and, fearing she should take cold, insisted upon her going home, though most sorry to be under a necessity of pressing her to leave me; but her health was at stake, and my regard for *that* swallowed up all selfish motives.—She rose and took hold of my arm, and we walked slowly towards the house.—It was almost dusk, and nobody appeared; but when we came within about a hundred yards of it, she withdrew her arm, and said, “Good night, my love; shall I see you again to-morrow?”

“I will not take leave of you—said I—pressing her hand; I can steal into your apartment unperceived.”

“Oh! not for the world!—replied she, looking frightened—though my father does not leave the parlour till he goes to bed, yet some of the servants may see you; and I would not, on any account, have you insulted by him again.—Rather let me go home with *you*.”

“No, my dearest—said I—not to-night; we will think on some scheme. I am sure if you go to supper in the parlour as usual, I can slip up stairs while the servants are employed in waiting, and carrying in the things; and if I should meet with
 Ridley

Ridley (her woman) I can secure *her* in my interest."

She smiled, and trembled with fear and delight.—I kissed her hand, and begged her to go into the house.—“Delay, my love, will produce suspicion.”

“What will you do for supper?” said she, in a pitying tone.

“Feast on your beauties, my angel,” answered I, once more embracing her.

She then broke from me, blushing, and ran into the house; I waited till they were all quiet, and then stepped softly up stairs.

Luckily, the apartment allotted to my wife and me was in one of the wings, which is very large, and opposite to *that* occupied by Sir Robert.—However, when I entered the chamber, Ridley, who was employed about her lady’s things, started as if she had seen a ghost, and was, I believe, ready to shriek; but I soon made her sensible of the necessity there was for her being both quiet and secret.—As she is very much attached to my wife, she expressed great satisfaction at seeing me there, and left me in peaceable possession of my post.

I employed myself, while I was alone, in looking over part of my wife’s night-dress, which was laid ready for her; in admiring the elegance of her taste.—But, H—ns! what were my transports when she herself appeared! when I folded her in my longing arms! when I enjoyed all the repose I was capable of on her downy bosom!—But I should have proceeded gradually.

After having waited a considerable time, bridling my impatience as well as I could, I heard her softly trip up stairs; I threw open the door hastily, and was going to embrace her.—The dear angel was loaded with jellies, a large bottle, and some potted partridge.—When she had put them on a table, she took out of her pocket a French roll neatly wrapped up in paper, and some sweetmeats.

“I have brought you your supper,” said she, smiling.

“My dear life—said I, passionately caressing her—what trouble has your exquisite tenderness given you!—And, indeed, Lucy, I have no sort of inclination to eat; but I am more weary than you can imagine,” continued I, sighing, and looking on her tenderly.

“Well! but do, take some refreshment—said the dear creature—I will eat with you if that will be any inducement. I could hardly taste any of the supper below, because I would enjoy it with you.—I sat full of anxiety, indeed, lest you should be discovered.”

I gazed on her with wonder and with love, and my love increased every moment; but though I wanted no food myself, I thanked her a thousand times for her tender care of me, and even blushed to see her reduced to take such methods, which, however, fully convinced me of the sincerity of her affection.—After having partaken of just enough of her entertainment to shew my gratitude, I told her that I looked upon *that* as my bridal night, as I should come to her arms more entirely her's than ever,

ever, and insisting also upon locking Mrs. Ridley out, adding, that I would undress her myself.

She, at first, made a little opposition, but at length consented, provided I would only let her bid Ridley tell her sister that she had retired for the night.—“ Bab—continued she—has behaved to me in the most friendly and affectionate manner, and is very much attached to me. If you please, therefore, I will make her acquainted with our proceedings and designs in the morning.

O Mostyn! how beautiful did she look while she spoke; what sweet submission was there in her dear downcast eyes, while she requested my permission to let her open her whole heart to her amiable sister! and with what exquisite, but modest, tenderness were they raised up to me, when I strained her to my beating bosom, which glowed with transports never felt before!—I cannot, indeed, I dare not tell you half her excellencies, lest I should set you madding like myself.

At break of day she urged me to leave her, though she, at the same time, held me close in her arms.---Prudence, loth as we were to obey its call, made it necessary for us to separate till the evening; but I would not go from her till she had promised to meet me again in the Park, if the weather was not unfavourable, as both she and Sir Robert had declined seeing company after that unhappy accident.

With the greatest reluctance I quitted her. — When I came home I found that Hopkins had been very much alarmed, not knowing what to think of my absence from home all night.—He

told me that my boy was in an agony of sorrow on my not returning at his usual hour of going to bed; screaming in such a manner that they could not pacify him, because his dear papa had left him, and was lost.—Poor, little, affectionate fellow!——

I ran up into his room.—He had cried himself asleep.—He looked like the picture of Cupid; and I sat down by his side, that he might have the happiness of seeing me the moment he opened his eyes.—The dear rogue opened his eyes at last; but having wearied himself with fretting about me, only cried, “Papa!” stretching out his pretty hands to me, and fell asleep again directly.—The concern which this dear infant discovers for me makes me every hour remember my past follies with the keener remorse.—I am now so accustomed to the sight of him, and am really so fond of him, that I am afraid I shall never be able to live without him; and it will be highly improper to have him in the house with my wife.—I shall never be quite satisfied, however, unless he is near me, that I may frequently see him.—If he is at a distance from me I shall have no opportunity of superintending his education; his morals will probably be corrupted, and I shall be deprived of every endearing proof of his filial love.—No, Mostyn, he is my child; I feel, I strongly feel that I am his father; he is blest with sense, and he has a considerable share of sensibility; and I would willingly have him under my own eye, in order to prevent his head from being filled with wrong ideas, and his heart from being polluted by those

those passions which have been so fatal to *my* peace.—When he is at a proper age I will inform him of his birth, and endeavour to make him as easy under his illegitimacy as I can; yet I must ever sigh to think that he is not the son of my dear, my truly beloved Lucy.—I might then have openly exulted in my paternal character.

LETTER LXIV.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

MY spirits have been so much depressed ever since the death of lady Charbury, till within these few days, that I have not been able to sit down to do any thing, and now I shall begin with snubbing you.—Are you not a sad, saucy girl, miss Cecilia, to pretend to tell me that I shall be soon reconciled to life, and all the good things in this world, as lord Charbury's hand is now at liberty.—I declare to you, then, that I do not believe he has a single thought about me.—Since the interment of poor Constantia he has been here every day, it is true, and is very assiduous about me, and very solicitous to please me; but a man of common politeness so frequently at our house could not well behave otherwise.—Sir Robert, to be sure, is in high good humour upon the frequency of his visits.—My dear, good father has again taken it strongly into his head that he shall see his daughter a countess.—Now actually the title and fortune are quite out of the question with *me*; but the man is as handsome as an angel

gel—(do not cry out, Fie Bab, now)—and almost as good as one in behaving so sweetly to a woman whom he did not, I am certain, love.—I never imagined, you know, that he was desirous of marrying her; and I am convinced, by the manner in which he bears the loss of her, that I was not too hasty in my conjectures.—He behaves, indeed, with a becoming seriousness, and has undoubtedly, from the nature of his attachment to her, from his humanity, and from the circumstances attending her death, been much affected; yet I must own, Cecilia, I am not thoroughly satisfied with the little regard he pays to her memory.

I was talking in this strain to Dashwood the other day, and he told his friend what I said, I fancy; for he has looked grave at me ever since.—By the way, I have a vast deal to tell you about this brother of mine, could I but put his friend out of my head.—Lucy and he met in the park accidentally, it seems, and somehow he got into her chamber.—He now sleeps in it every night. Lucy appears to be happier than ever, and Dashwood has not spoken a rational word from that time to this.—In short, they are quite ready to devour each other, and so much intoxicated with their stolen interviews, that they are not fit to converse with any body else.—I have not seen him yet in the house; for they manage matters very snugly, lest my father, whose gout favours their clandestine meetings, should interrupt their proceedings, on being informed of them; but I am almost every day in the park with Lucy; and
while

while she leans on Dashwood's arm, *I* saunter with lord Charbury, who has frequently offered to support me when I looked tired; but I have so frequently refused his assistance, that he is, I suppose, disgusted.—He certainly does not grieve for his wife, though he is by no means chearful.—Perhaps he does not yet think it decent. He converses freely, indeed, upon all subjects; but he *seldom* mentions *her*; *never* without launching out in praise of *my* friendship for her, and begging over and over again to have that friendship transferred to *him*.—What would the man be at?—Were he to see my heart, he would have no reason to complain of me.—And yet I would not have him see it, at present, for millions.—You cannot think how well his mourning becomes him, and how aptly he accommodates his features to his cloaths.—What fine languishing blue eyes he has! They almost put me out of countenance sometimes; but whenever I happen to catch them fixed on *me*, they are thrown down with such a respectful timidity—O men! men! I will not say what I think of them; but it is really surprising that my father, after the escape which I have already had, and after poor Lucy's unhappy affair, should ever entertain thoughts he certainly *does* entertain, by his *prodigious* civility to Charbury, who pays *prodigious* court to *him*.—Now you know if he had any meaning in his behaviour, he should endeavour also to make a friend of *me*.—No, no, my dear, we are all upon a wrong scent.—My lord has indisputably got a girl somewhere.—Men are all alike, Cecy.

L E T T E R L X V .

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I AM the happiest of mortals.---My Lucy and I not only see each other every day, but almost every hour in the day. I have gained the servants; and as Sir Robert cannot ramble much at present I live entirely at my ease. I breakfast with my wife, my angel, every morning; then go home, and spend an hour with Ned; meet my dear girl again in the park or garden (for I have even ventured into the garden) before dinner; then return home, and dine with my boy, and go in search of my Lucy, whom I leave not till the next day.—I am become quite another creature; I have now no load upon my mind, nothing to be ashamed of; I am as light as air.—My charming *love* too, convinced of the sincerity of my reformation and of my fidelity to her, is happier than ever.—We pass our days, like the first pair, in Paradise.

Bab and Charbury are also perpetually together; but they do not seem to make any thing of their conversations yet; he cannot, it is true, with decency, make any offers so soon after the death of his wife; nor will he think of making any till he imagines they will not be refused. As to my lively sister, she appears with her usual vivacity; but I can see that she is at times not so well pleased as she seems to be; she is quite
silent,

silent, however, upon this subject to Lucy; and my dear girl is, indeed, too much engaged to attend to her.—They are all fond of Ned, whom I brought one day with me, at my wife's earnest request, to the park.

Charbury said he was a glorious boy; and looking at Bab, added, that he must beg him, as he had not one of his own.

She did not, I thought, like *that* speech; for she made up a lip at my lord. Then, taking the child in her lap, as we were sitting on a bench, she asked him which of us two he would have for his papa.

The young rogue smiled, and pointed at me.

Bab said, it was a wise child who knew his own father.—Surely she cannot suppose that lord Charbury had any connection with Die!—I actually believe he never saw her but in public; nor do I imagine that he ever had any attachments like mine.—Justice obliges me to say that Bellers never gave me room to believe she was ever unfaithful to me. As much as she had distressed me, I should think I wronged her if I charged her with infidelity.—The boy is so like me too.—Yet Bab certainly suspected lord Charbury, who, entirely undeserving of such an attack, did not receive it as it was intended.—He loves her, I am strongly of opinion; but as there are no rivals at present, there is no occasion for his being in a hurry.

We had in the evening of that day a little concert in a temple in the park. —The two charming sisters sung to their mandolines; I accompanied them upon the violencello, and Charbury played the

the German flute. My Lucy warbled out such melting notes that they ravished my senses, and my lord, I thought, seemed no less delighted with Bab's melodious tones.—They will come to a good understanding, I trust, by and by.

L E T T E R LXVI.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

THERE is, positively, no bearing Dashwood. He is grown so horribly provoking within these few days, that I must leave him and his Lucy to themselves.—Since his re-admission to her he has been so distractedly fond of her that he is perpetually playing the fool.—Their fooleries may be very allowable, perhaps, in private; but I am sure they should not be exhibited before my lord, who thinks he is licensed by them to take the same liberties with me. Dashwood never walks with his wife without putting *her* arm through *his*. My lord, therefore, always makes a similar attempt upon mine; though I actually believe he does it more from *imitation* than *inclination*.—By this behaviour of he vexes me: I pull my hand away a hundred times; he still catches it again.—Nay, the other night, when Lucy and I had been both singing to them at their request, Charbury absolutely seized my hand, and carried it to his lips, while Dashwood was in his raptures with Lucy; and because I snatched it away in a hurry he seemed not at all satisfied: he positively pouted. I do not understand this kind of carriage. I am just now not at all
pleased

pleased with him.—I seem, indeed, to be the only discontented person in the *partie quarre*.

Dashwood is become a mere romp; Lucy likes every thing *he* likes; and lord Charbury is quite ready to fall in with their ridiculous amusements.—After the music, therefore, I went and sat by myself at a distance from them.—In a short time my lord followed me, and sat down by me.—I affected not to see him, but leant my head upon my hand.

“Are you not well, miss Grafton?” said he at last.

“I have got the head-ach, my lord—replied I, rather peevishly—and should be glad to be quiet.”

He rose immediately, sighed, and retired to a seat a little farther off, but where he could see me.

I sighed too, like a simpleton as I am, after I had sent him away, and grew out of humour with myself; consequently *in* humour with *him*.—I strove, however, to prevent his reading the emotions of my heart in my features; but he was so assiduous about me as soon as I permitted him to approach, so earnestly intreated me to lean on him to rest me as we walked homeward; pressed my hand so gently, and looked so concerned for my supposed illness, that my sickness and fretfulness—I do not know how—fled away together, and I became quite another creature.—He, as if determined to conduct himself just as *I* did, grew excessively lively all on a sudden.—In short, we were surprised to hear a clock strike twelve.—I wondered every moment that he made no effort to take his leave, yet I dreaded, I confess, the moment of his departure.

At length he rose, made an apology for staying so late, hoped my head was thoroughly well, and declared that he had not power to leave his charming friend, while she was indisposed.

I smiled, and looked foolish, I believe.

With a warmer pressure of my hand than usual, he added, "Will you not be my friend, miss Grafton—fixing his eyes earnestly on my face—may I reckon upon so great a felicity?"

"I am the friend of every person, my lord, who merits my friendship; and while you deserve it, you may depend upon it."

"Lovely creature!" said he, softly, lifting my hand to his lips, though fearfully, and as if he was very unwilling to offend me.—Then aloud, "I will always endeavour to deserve it, madam, and hope soon to render you more sensible of my meriting it."

When he had uttered these words he hastily quitted me, and I went up to my chamber to reflect upon them; but I cannot yet make any thing of them to give me any satisfaction.

L E T T E R L X V I I .

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

MY dear Lucy will soon begin, I fear, to discover proofs of our re-union.—Yet why do I say I *fear*—what will give me real transport, if she does but happily advance to the end of her time.

The

The difficulty will be to conceal her situation from our father.—I hope, indeed, to see him reconciled entirely to me before her lying-in, but there is not yet any prospect of a reconciliation. He continues still immoveably irascible, tho' my dearest girl has more than once ventured to tell him how much she wished for his taking me into his favour again. Often have I caught her weeping upon my account.

Finding her in tears the other day, I was moved at them in a particular manner.—I kissed them as they fell, while the dear angel, sighing, said, "I cannot bear to see you make such undue submissions for *my* sake."

"It is for *your* sake alone—replied I—my life, that I *could* make them; but I am happy in being able to give you so sincere and striking a proof of my love."

The dear creature pressed me to her bosom, and promised to resume her former cheerfulness as long as I was kind enough to make myself contented.—But I shall not be so if she is not perfectly easy every way; Bab. tells me she is often not well, and that she is obliged to invent an excuse to get out of Sir Robert's sight.—I pass sometimes the greatest part of the day in her room, that I may, by contributing to her relief to the utmost of my power, lessen the pain and uneasiness which she must necessarily, and not unfrequently, feel.

We were alarmed a good deal yesterday.—As she had not been very well, I had insisted upon her taking her breakfast in bed.—I was actually pouring out the tea for her by the bed-side, when I

heard Sir Robert stumping up the stairs which led to our apartment; a place he seldom attempts to enter; but as Lucy did not make her appearance at breakfast, he being very fond of her, came to enquire after her himself.—I had just time to retire into a closet; but in my retreat almost overturned the table.—I should have faced him indeed, I believe, had not my fears for *her* deterred me.—However, there is something so scandalously mean in thus skulking about a man's house, and stealing into it without his knowledge, that I cannot tell how to support the shabbiness of my carriage.—But a discovery at this time might prove fatal to my wife.—She has already sufficiently suffered for me; I will, therefore, endure any thing, rather than expose *her* again.—It is not, indeed, in my power to act otherwise; I loved her extremely before that horrid attempt, but now *my life* is bound up with *her's*.—To think of being deprived of her is distraction.

I have found in the old woman with whom I lodge, or *did* lodge, to speak with propriety, a very kind nurse and school-mistress for my boy.—She has also exceedingly ingratiated herself with him.—The child is very good-natured, and easily pleased.—He has promised to mind Mrs. Burton, and to learn to read very soon.—I hope, therefore, to wean him from me by degrees, before I send him to school. Sorry am I that there is any necessity for his removal from me; but I cannot possibly think of taking him into the house with me, should my wife and I be ever happy enough to live together again.—My father is entirely of my

my opinion with regard to Ned's removal; and says that he shall be with *him* sometimes, provided he goes by the name of Bellers, or any other name I like better—Dashwood excepted.—My lord also expressed the greatest joy of hearing of my wife's being pregnant again; imagining that a lying-in may forward a reconciliation, and joins with me in wishing heartily that no accident may destroy our hopes.—No accident of the *same* nature *will*, I will venture to say, destroy them; for I hear from Hopkins, that the unfortunate Die is as miserable as a woman can be, tortured with remorse.—It is impossible for her to hold out much longer.—May her misery be shortened in this world, and may Heaven look on her with an eye of mercy in the world to come, if she expires a sincere penitent.—I dare not think of her—I am too much affected by her deplorable condition.

Charbury and Bab are still at see-saw. Both seem to be violently inclined to each other, and yet neither of them knows how to break the ice.—I do not chuse to interpose; I have a very high opinion of Charbury; but I would rather have their affairs conducted by themselves.—It is an awkward business to interfere between two persons in their situation.

L E T T E R LXVIII.

Miss GRAFTON to Miss BLONDEL.

ALL my expectations with regard to lord Charbury are over.—Yet why do I talk of expectations!—What right had I to form any?—With what reason could I think of a man who never encouraged me to suppose that he ever bestowed a single thought upon me.—But he is now fixed, I fancy; and I imagine that he will as soon as he lays aside his mourning put on his wedding-cloaths.—He is, however, obliged to us for having brought him acquainted with his new *flame*; for had he not seen her at *our* house, it is highly probable that he might never have seen her at all.—I could not well, without being deficient in good manners, decline Sally Goldsby's offer to take a breakfast with me before she set out for Bath, by way of bidding me adieu; and she brought with her such a *beauty* from Ireland, my dear, that she has pierced poor Charbury's heart through and through.—It must be composed of very soft materials, surely. However, I am quite cured of my ridiculous prepossession in his favour.—The man is undoubtedly handsome, and can be very entertaining when he pleases; but I would not have him fancy himself a demi-god—a Narcissus.—He is nobody, as to *person*, compared to Dashwood.—But after what I have said, I should endeavour to give you some idea of this lovely creature, who has captivated him.—She is a long, tall, thin,

thin, awkward animal, with a very fair complexion, indeed; but then she has monstrous high cheek-bones, just rounded over in the middle with the ruddiness of a Catharine pear; she has mighty simpering lips, pretty much resembling a skain of scarlet silk; her eyes are long, languishing, and of a sky blue.—Have you not heard men talk about such eyes, my dear?—Methinks I could write a few lines just now, which would place her before you.—Her eye-brows are thin and long too, just like her eye-lashes, and her teeth are wondrous white.—In short, I believe she may be reckoned very handsome by the men; yet I own I cannot find out her personal charms, though I am different from many women, by not being blind to *beauty* in my own sex.—However, I solemnly declare to you, that I never could find any in Miss Bourke.—But poor lord Charbury was not of *my* way of thinking; for happening to come in soon afterwards, he was so struck with her, that he was incapable of attending to any body but this fine stranger.—She actually seemed not at all insensible—few women would, I believe, be so to such a man, though I am so *indifferent*.

Having nothing to do, I sat and observed them.---He came in rather with a serious face. It happened to be the very morning after we had spent the evening in so friendly a manner together, of which I gave you an account in a former letter.---I received him therefore very graciously; and my reception really seemed to give him pleasure; but that pleasure was so violently increased by the enlivening

enlivening conversation of this Hibernian goddess, that he appeared to be almost out of his senses.—He laughed immoderately (—by the way I have hardly seen him venture to smile since the death of my lady)—and *she flirted* amazingly—noddling her head like a China figure upon a chimney-piece; her eyes danced, and she threw herself into the agonies of politeness.—I sat and smiled at the exhibition of so new a scene; and my lord, I believe, from my behaviour, thought I was as much delighted with it as he was himself.

When breakfast was over, of which my lord, contrary to his usual custom, had a very considerable share, I could not refuse to comply with miss Goldsby's request, when she very modestly and politely desired me to shew her friend the gardens and park.—My lord discovered a prodigious readiness to attend them; nay he really took as much pains to point out the different views, and to receive as much pleasure from their admiration of them, as if he had been the owner of them; every now and then offering his hand to the beauty, and catching her if she stumbled; and I can assure you she stumbled pretty often, on purpose, doubtless, in order to have an opportunity of being assisted by him.—He, also, upon their admiring the flowers, took the liberty of making nosegays for them: but miss Bourke's was the most elegant one.—He just deigned to look at me, indeed, as if to ask *my* leave; though by doing so you will, I believe, allow, that he gave his eyes unnecessary trouble.

While

While he was hurrying about gathering flowers, that he might lose as little as possible of the lady's conversation, she asked me who he was.

" Lord Charbury," I coolly replied.

" A mighty pretty gentleman, a very pretty gentleman *indeed*," replied she.

Scarcely were these words out of her mouth when he presented the nosegay to her ; and she gave him *such* a look, that his heart could not possibly stand against the *expression* contained in it.

When we came to the temple in the park, Lucy's mandoline and mine lay there.—O ! you play, ma'am ; may I ask the favour of an air ?"

" Miss Grafton not only plays, but sings," said Sally Goldsby.

" I dare say she does—replied miss Bourke—and is not your lordship a performer ?"

He bowed and smiled.—Coming up to me, " Do, my dear miss Grafton—said he—favour us with your heavenly voice."—His dear miss Grafton, indeed ! mighty free and saucy—but I was resolved to mortify him.

Without deigning to cast my eyes once towards him, I said that I hoped the ladies would excuse me, as I really was unable to oblige them at that time. But I do not believe the wretch minded me ; for on miss Bourke's taking up one of the mandolines just then, he hastily cried, " Pray, madam, oblige us ; I am sure you are a complete mistress of it."

I could not help smiling again at his being so *sure* before he had heard her. However, the girl really sung very well, and would have pleased most judges,

judges, had she not been so intolerably affected.---My lord *encored* her, and the misses were vastly merry; I was not so myself; for I began to think that they intended to dine.---Luckily on the sun's breaking out I complained of the heat, and proposed returning to the house.---As soon as we entered miss Goldsby thought proper to talk of going; and I really believe my lord was ready to ask them to stay.---However, he was too considerate to carry the jest quite so far.---But he flew to conduct miss Bourke to the carriage, leaving poor Sally and I to follow by ourselves.

When they were gone I went up to my own room, and---O, Cecilia! how I blush to own it---yet you *must* know all my weakness---I felt my heart ready to burst; and had I not been relieved by a shower of tears, I should, probably, have fainted away.---How ridiculous am I! and how do I despise myself for being so foolishly attached to a man, who is totally indifferent about *me*.---Let me conceal my folly from every body but from *you*.---I am almost afraid and ashamed to send this letter from my hands.---Yet had I not your friendly bosom to receive my complainings, I might, perhaps, for a vent, be led to expose myself to this too lovely author of my uneasiness.---I hope, however, my Cecilia, that my pride will prevent me from coming to so glaring an indiscretion.—No—he shall not see me *look* as if I was uneasy.—I will rather seem pleased with miss Bourke, than discover any dislike to her.—I am even sorry that I have drawn her in so unfavourable a light to you.—It is mean to
paint

paint any body in contemptible colours, who is not purposely ridiculous. I have been strongly tempted to throw this letter into the fire; but I am not able at present to write another to my satisfaction.—Yet you cannot think how I hate myself for my antipathy to a girl, only because she happens to please lord Charbury, as she certainly does.—What is it to me whom he likes, or whom he dislikes?—I feel myself, however, excessively disconcerted about what ought to give me no sort of disturbance. To remove myself out of his sight is now the only remedy left for me.—I would come to *you* did not my father's gout, and sister's situation, forbid me to think of such a visit.—Lucy is, at present, breeding, and consequently not always well; and as Dashwood is very much alarmed lest my father should discover it, and fright her with his anger, I do all I can to assist her in the concealment of her condition.—We all connive, but none of us approve of our connivance. For *her* sake, however, and indeed on my brother's account—he well deserves to be called so, for his tender and affectionate behaviour to his Lucy—I should be extremely distressed to have her life endangered. A second fright would, perhaps, throw her into a bad state of health for the remainder of her days, and her ill health may tend to weaken his attachment to her. There is no answering for the constancy of the best man in the world. I have, nevertheless, so high an opinion of Dashwood, that I do not imagine any thing can shake his fidelity to my sister, or lessen his affection for her. He seems uneasy and fearful if the slightest breeze

breeze blows upon her, trembles if she looks but a little paler than usual ; and if she is in the least disordered confines himself the whole day to her chamber ; obliges her to lie down, and reads her asleep.—After having seen Lucy happy in so fond a husband, a less affectionate one will not content *me*.—Charbury, it is certain, behaved unexceptionably to Constantia, tho' not with the tenderness of a Dashwood.—Would I could never think of him any more !

L E T T E R LXIX.

From the same to the same.

I HAD really cried so much that I was very unfit to appear at dinner.—I went down, therefore, into the garden, hoping that the air would take off the redness of my eyes.—I saw my lord walking backwards and forwards in the grass-walk with folded arms.—In order to avoid him I went round the shrubbery, and sat down upon a little green bench by the side of the mount.---When I had been there a few minutes he joined me.---Not being aware of him, I felt such a palpitation at my heart, that I did not know how to speak.---He sat down by me, and very familiarly taking my hand, said, “Where have you hid yourself ever since your company left you ? I have been seeking you in every place I could think of.---But you look grave, miss Grafton ; has any thing happened to disquiet you ?”

I could scarcely answer, “No ;” and it was uttered in so tremulous a tone, that he repeated it
after

after me, pressing my hand.—“Something must have affected you—added he, in plaintive accents—in an uncommon manner.”

“I am only not in spirits, just now, my lord,” replied I, withdrawing my hand.

Hearing the dinner-bell at that instant, I rose directly, and made all the haste I could to the house; while he talked to me all the way, running by my side; telling me that I should fatigue myself, that I should spoil my appetite, and that I need not be in such a hurry.—I made no answer.

At dinner I strove to do the honours of the table in the best manner; affecting an ease which I did not feel.—I also endeavoured to take no more notice of my lord than common civility required; yet I could not help observing, that he not only examined me with particular attention, but was remarkably assiduous in his carriage to me; that attention, and his assiduity together, seemed to give Sir Robert great pleasure, and consequently made *me* sigh; being well assured that my poor father's expectations would come to nothing.—However, as he left my lord to take his nap, I was obliged to sit with him till his return.—My sister went away to meet Dashwood.

Very stupid companions were we to each other.—I said but little to *him*, though to do him justice he set *his* wits to work to amuse me; yet I could not recover my temper.—I spoke sometimes rather peevishly to him.—The moment my father returned I rose and ran up stairs, though my lord

caught my hand as I passed him, and said, "Are you going to leave us?"—We have not, indeed, from the beginning, treated him with much ceremony; the manner in which my father invited him rendered a ceremonious behaviour quite unnecessary; for upon his second visit to us, complaining how melancholy his hours were at Elm Park, Sir Robert, with much friendliness and cunning too, desired him to make *his* house his home.—My lord actually took him at his word, and does every thing but sleep here.—We cannot, therefore, be expected to confine ourselves with him.—I thought I heard him in the garden while I was writing, and was foolish enough to rise twice from my chair to go and look at him; I saw him walking with his arms folded, as he did before dinner; he appeared to be melancholy; he was thinking, I suppose, of miss Bourke.—Pray, my dear, burn these letters, I am quite ashamed of them.—I will not positively write another word about him.

LETTER

LETTER LXX.

From the same to the same.

POOOR, dear Charbury, how I have injured him by my suspicions!—O, my Cecilia! if there is truth in *man*, I am, I ever have been, the sole possessor of his heart.—Bear with me now, my dear girl; I shall tire you as much with his praises as I have done before with his faults.—My heart is so full I know not what I write.—Lucy is come to tell me that he enquires for me.—I run, I fly to meet him.—You must stay, child, till he come back.

In Continuation.

It was with great difficulty that I could prevail on him to spare me; though I assured him my business was to write to the dearest friend in the world.—“You cannot have a dearer than myself”—said he, holding both my hands, and looking such unutterable things.—In short, I could not get away, till I assured him that I was going to write upon a subject with which he ought to be pleased. He wanted very much to see my letter; but I broke from him without making any promise of any kind.—I am now going to give you a detail of our proceedings.

When I had finished my last letter I went down to walk in the park, as you know I usually do in a fine evening.—I would have passed my lord, but

he immediately joined me. I asked him if he knew where my brother and sister were.—He asked me, in return, if he should wait on me to them.—As we walked along he endeavoured to draw me into conversation, but I chiefly replied in monosyllables, which I uttered in a low voice, and indeed without looking at him.—At last, hearing him sigh, I could not help turning my head; he actually appeared an object of pity, though I was far from believing that I had rendered him so.—

There was the most expressive concern, the most pleasing softness in his countenance to be imagined.—I suppose I looked as if I was affected at his appearance; for he immediately stole his hand into mine, and sighed again.—His second sigh almost staggered my resolution; yet I had fortitude enough to draw it back in a hurry without looking at him.—By this time we reached Dashwood and my sister; but they were so taken up with each other, that after the first civilities were over they had neither leisure nor inclination to mind us. I went therefore, and sat down upon one of the little green benches, on which there is barely room for two, and spread my gown over it, that Charbury might not attempt to place himself by me.—He saw my design, and sat down on a bench on the opposite side, leaning his head upon his hand, and appearing to give himself up to melancholy.—We were not at a great distance from each other; I saw his bosom heave; I even heard him sigh.—I became very uneasy, and began to ask myself if my behaviour was not only extremely
whimsical,

whimsical, but highly absurd, not to say indelicate.—What right had I to be displeased with lord Charbury's taking notice of any lady; as he was not a lover of mine, I could have no reason to be angry with his carriage; and I thought I was plainly letting him see I desired to behold him in that light, by thus making him of more consequence than he really was to me.—I actually blushed, while I sat reflecting in this manner on my own folly; yet though I wished immediately to alter so ridiculous a behaviour, I could not presently bring myself to do it.—I was so shocked, and so out of humour, that I could not command myself; and he undoubtedly penetrated into the recesses of my mind; for he rose, and coming close to me, gently took up my gown in order to sit by me; but as a little of my foolish pride remained I snatched it from him, and laid it down in the same place.—He sighed and looked at me for some moments, during which I held down my head.—“What have I done, miss Grafton—said he—to offend you?—Why will you not suffer me to sit by you?”

“Nothing, my lord,” replied I, half inclined to come to.

“Nothing!”—answered he.—“Will the charming miss Grafton be displeased with me for nothing?”—Then throwing himself on the grass at my feet, “Tell me—continued he, fixing his eyes tenderly on me—why you, who have ever been so condescending, whom I have always

esteemed my sincerest friend, tell me why you are so cruelly changed?"

"Pray, rise, my lord,"—said I, blushing—"I hate to see a man upon his knees."

He rose directly, and with a deep sigh, cried, "I am afraid I am become a disagreeable object to you, madam, in any attitude; but if you would only retain consideration enough for me to let me know my faults, I do assure you I would leave nothing unattempted to deserve the return of your favour; I once flattered myself with the enjoyment of that inestimable blessing."

This address pleased me not a little, I own; but it also perplexed me.—I could not tell what reply to make to it, without an avowal of my jealousy.—I therefore remained silent for some moments. Then finding that he did not offer to stir, I said, though in a silly tone, and with, I dare believe, a sillier face, "I am very capricious to-day, my lord; I wish you would leave me."

"And can you really be so cruel as to send me from you—said he—without receiving me upon a friendly footing again?"

"Why, have we quarrelled then?" replied I, plainly discovering my dissimulation; plainly proving, by the manner in which I spoke, I was not really in the least angry with him.

"I never *have* quarrelled, I never *can* quarrel with the dear lovely miss Grafton," answered he, once more lifting up my gown, sitting down by me, and spreading it over him, at the same time taking hold of my hand.

You

You cannot think, my Cecilia, how I felt at this alteration in his behaviour. A sudden flood of joy rushed over me; I could hardly support myself; my face and neck glowed like fire; my limbs trembled, and had I been standing I must have certainly fallen; agitated as I was I could hardly keep my seat.—Perceiving my confusion, though I believe he did not imagine that he should see me so much affected, he put his other hand to my heart, and cried, in a kind of fright, “Good G—d! how you tremble; what’s the matter my dearest life,” added he, catching me in his arms.

I heard no more.—Convinced that I was beloved by him, I was quite overcome.—When I recovered my senses, I found my head on his bosom; his face was close to mine; that face which I had so long admired; and he was calling me a thousand times his dear, dear Bab, his life, his love, and begging me to tell him what had occasioned my disorder.—I could not speak to him at first; but as soon as I became sensible of my situation, I strove to disengage myself from him. He still, however, held me fast, and pressed my hands alternately to his lips, begging me to pardon the abrupt discovery of a passion which he had felt from his first acquaintance with me; but that unhappily situated as he was, he had not dared to venture to indulge it; as he, at the same time, perceived Constantia’s prepossession for him, which, had it not been gratified, must have rendered her totally wretched.

Here

Here he made a pretty apology for having been obliged to appear so vain; but confessed that he could not see her miserable after she was entrusted entirely to *his* care, without endeavouring to relieve her.—“ It cost me indeed very dear—continued he—to give up the flattering hopes I had formed of gaining *your* heart, miss Grafton.—I actually wished with the greatest earnestness to prevail on her to accept of Lord Hillwood’s overtures, and cannot describe the reluctance with which I went through the ceremony, which would deprive me for ever of the pleasure of seeing *you* as usual, as I could not see you without loving you still more ardently for your friendship for poor Constantia.—But when she was dead, though I was extremely shocked at her untimely fate, I thought myself at liberty to devote the remainder of my happy hours to my adored miss Grafton.—I implored your friendship, madam; and you was so kind as not to refuse my request.—I looked upon myself as blessed by your sweet condescension.—Delicacy, at first, forbade me to be too presuming; but from the winning freedom of your behaviour to me, I *hoped*—though I dreaded to speak, lest I should, finding myself mistaken, be rendered completely wretched.—Even this morning I flattered myself that you still looked on me with favourable eyes. What has occasioned so considerable a change—a change so severely felt by me—you—you can inform me. When I saw you without life, without motion, I own that not all my dread of your displeasure could any longer confine my passion in my breast; and I now positively declare, that the happiness

pineness or misery of my future life depends entirely upon you, madam.

Here he ceased to speak; but had you seen him while he was speaking!—The tenderness which beamed from his charming eyes, his becoming modesty, his impassioned looks, his harmonious voice, and the numberless graces which accompanied every soft expression, would have made me idolize him, if I had never loved him before.—Yet I knew not what to say to him.—I was most certainly delighted and transported.—I was only afraid of discovering the delicious sensations which I felt upon the animating occasion; I therefore said nothing.—However, during my silence I considered, that to a man who had the most unexceptionable character, to a man to whom my father wished earnestly to be allied, to the man who had so nobly behaved to the girl committed to his care, and in so honourable a manner to me, a very rigid reserve was altogether absurd and unnecessary.—In consequence of this way of thinking, I honestly replied, when he urged me to deliver him from a state of the most painful suspense, that he had always been dear to me, and that if he really imagined I could make him happy, I was ready to give him my hand, with my father's consent, which I freely permitted him to solicit.

Was not this saying a great deal, Cecilia?—Yet it was not half what I longed to say; nor was it half enough to satisfy him, though he very rapturously kissed my hand, and thanked me.—After having pressed me to tell him if I was quite recovered from the disorder which had so much alarmed him; and after having discovered a strong desire

desire to know what had occasioned it, he by degrees drew every secret from my heart relating to him.—When he found from my communications, that I loved him long before his marriage with Constantia—“H——n’s I—cried he—my lovely creature, what uneasiness have I given you! but unintentionally I am sure.—Had I but known, my charming Bab, that you was as tenderly attached to me as Constantia was, not all the powers on earth could have brought me to marry the woman whom I did not love, when *she*, the transported *she*, whom I deoted on, sighed for me.—But tell me, my dear Bab, do you love me as well *now* as you did *then*?—And has not my dissembled coolness lessened your affection?”

“What do you think—said I laughing.—Was my monstrous jealousy this morning a proof of my indifference?”

My sweet, lively creature, how you delight me,” replied he, catching me in his arms.—I then desired him, being actually afraid to trust myself any longer with a man so enchantingly engaging, to give me time to finish a letter to you.—I could hardly obtain that request.—He calls me under my window. Was ever a voice so harmonious?—I looked out to tell him I had just done. He says I have had time enough to write a volume, and that he can live no longer without me.

In Continuation.

I snatch a moment to inform you, my dear, that you must have no more letters of the usual length.
My

My lord says we have both suffered enough in our former separation, to bear any unnecessary ones now. He will bring you to see me at Elm-park; but he insists upon being present at all our interviews, as he shall be jealous, he says, even of a *female* friend.—How he has rallied me about my fancying that he was in love with Miss Bourke!—He declares that he only paid his court to her out of respect to *me*, because he thought I looked in too languid a humour to entertain her; adding, however, that he must think himself eternally obliged to her, as he might not have known what passed in my heart this twelvemonth, if she had not made such a disturbance about it.—“I doat on your being jealous—says he—and when you cease to be so, shall grow apprehensive that you are weary of me.”—I tell him, laughing, that I am so well satisfied with his tenderness, I shall never be jealous again.—My father is charmed with him.—Lucy looks pleased to see her wild Bab so happy, and Dashwood calls us the *mad lovers*.

L E T T E R LXXI.

The Honourable EDWARD DASHWOOD to Sir
FRANCIS MOSTYN, Bart.

I Have just now received a letter from poor, unhappy Bellers, who expired a few hours after she wrote it, after having first desired that it might not be sent to me before her decease.—I hope it is a sincere proof of her penitence. She acknowledges

ledges all her faults in it, but confesses that her unalterable affection for me was the cause of her last rash action, and of her death.—What a cutting confession!—She declares she could not live deprived of my love, most ardently implores my forgiveness, and earnestly recommends her poor dear boy to my protection; assuring me solemnly that he is mine; that since she knew me she never had any connection with other men, though frequently solicited, and that the certainty of my loving the child was the greatest consolation to her in her dying moments.—She concludes thus pathetically: “May you, my for ever loved Dathwood, be ever blessed with your Lucy, who deserves all your tenderness, because she never swerved from the paths of virtue to obtain it. Possessed of a heart so truly excellent, she will not, surely, object to your shewing some regard for a child, who is not the less innocent, because his parents were guilty. Adieu, for ever.—Give my dear boy a kiss for his dying mother.”

You cannot imagine how this letter affected me. I could not even recover myself so entirely, but that a dejection appeared upon my countenance when I met my Lucy.—She kindly questioned me about my dejection, and I freely confessed the truth.—The dear angel fondly kissed me, and said she loved me the more for my sensibility; adding, that she would be a mother to my boy; nor could I make her easy till I fetched the little fellow, over whom I had been weeping till I had quite made him melancholy, so that he really wanted her
kind

her kind notice to revive him.—She desired me to set him by her, kissed him, called him her dear Ned, and gave him a pocket-book and pencil, with which he was so delighted, that he came to me to teach him to *write*, though he is hardly able to read.

In Continuation.

What a trying scene!—And yet it has produced the most perfect felicity I can taste in this world.

After having dined with Ned, as I usually do, when my Lucy is not ill, I went to meet her by appointment in the honey-suckle bower, just at the entrance of the park from the garden. The weather was excessively hot; and I was almost sorry that I had not desired her to remain in the house till the return of the evening had made the air more agreeable, especially when I saw her toiling down on the walk which led to this pleasant spot, which is always eligible.—I even ran out to meet her, though I went *out of bounds* by so doing. Taking her in my arms I brought her into the shade, placed her upon the seat, and made her rest on my bosom.—She looked as handsome as an angel, the heat having given an uncommon glow to her complexion; but as she was too tightly laced for a woman in *her* condition, on purpose indeed to conceal it, I was alarmed, being apprehensive of bad consequences, and insisted upon her unpinning her gown, and loosening her stays.—She complied with my request, to oblige me; but she was

so tired with all this, that as soon as it was done she fell asleep in my arms. Glad was I to see her so charmingly composed.

While I was gazing on her dear face, holding her enraptured, imagine my terror and surprize to see Sir Robert coming down the walk, leaning upon his cane.—I could neither fly nor hide, without waking my dearest girl; and I would rather have suffered any thing than have frightened *her*; I hoped, indeed, that however angry he might be with me, he would, for his daughter's sake, consider me.—Therefore, as soon as I saw him enter the bower with all the marks of astonishment and fury in his countenance, I lifted up my hands and eyes in a supplicating attitude, and begged him to spare his child.

“Villain!—cried he, forgetting every thing—have you again seduced her?”

She instantly started at his angry voice. “O my father—said she, eagerly springing from my arms, in which I strove to detain her, and falling upon her knees at his feet—Oh, Sir, forgive him—pardon my Dathwood—receive him as your son; the kindest of husbands.”

Her sighs and tears fast streaming, which pierced my soul with anguish unutterable, stopped her; while I, busy over her, urged her to rise, and begged her to be composed; but finding that she paid no regard to me, and hearing Sir Robert, who had glanced his eyes on her shape, say, “I see, I see how it is.—Who would be cursed with daughters?” I threw myself on my knees before him,

him, and vowed never to leave him till I had obtained his forgiveness for us both.—“ Though when you hear all, Sir—continued I—you will find that your daughter is too much an angel to *want* it.”

The eagerness with which I spoke, added to his favourite daughter’s distressful situation, and particular condition, with which, notwithstanding what he said, he was not displeased, I believed, as he always wished for grand-children, at last wrought upon him in her favour. He bad her get up, and take care of herself.

“ Never will I rise—said the amiable creature—till my husband receives your pardon, Sir.”

“ Pshaw!—replied Sir Robert—the girl is an idiot.—Surely he has bewitched you Lucy,” added he, offering her his hand to raise her.

She respectfully and affectionately kissed it, but remained in the same posture.

Frighted to death lest her continuance upon her knees might be too painful for her, I intreated her in such earnest terms to let me lift her from the ground, that Sir Robert cried, “ Take her up, and let me hear what you can both say for yourselves.”

“ No, no—replied he, apparently coming into humour, though loth at first to own the change our behaviour had made in him—I will talk with her here,” sitting down by his daughter, who taking him by one hand, and calling me to sit on the other side of her, said, “ Now I am between my two dearest friends on earth. Let me, my dear Sir

—added she, looking wishfully at her father—let me have the happiness of joining your hands.”

Sir Robert overcome, at length, by her winning voice, and her affecting manner, suffered her to make us friends; though he swore roundly, that if ever he found reason to repent of his easiness, it should be worse for us both.

It is quite unnecessary for *me*, Sir Robert, either to promise or swear upon the occasion; a single glance from my dear Lucy will at any time hinder my roving from her arms.—With whom, indeed, but with her, can I expect to find the exquisite felicity which I at present enjoy?”

The lovely creature smiled, conscious of her power over me, and transported to see her father so complying.—We soon afterwards went towards the house, and Sir Robert honoured me so far as to accept of my arm to assist him in getting home, not having been so far since he had the last fit of the gout.

The happy Charbury and Bab, who are now equally fond of each other, and only wait till the expiration of the mourning for the completion of their felicity, were agreeably surprised, and expressed the greatest satisfaction to see us so unexpectedly re-united.—My delicate Lucy blushed at the disorder of her dress, which she had not had leisure, which she had indeed totally forgot, to alter; while I, fearful only about her health, told her, and I told the truth, that she never looked half so lovely.—In the evening, with Sir Robert's consent, I took possession of my old apartment; and I hope that my dearest girl has received no
hurt

hurt from her surprize.—She had the address the next day to prevail on *her* father to make a visit to mine.—“ Mr. Dashwood—said he, after breakfast—I have been rude, I am afraid, to lord Budworth ; I have been too much ruffled to attend to forms ; but if you will go with me I will order the chariot.”

You may be sure I started no objection to *that* motion.—Before we set out, however, I kissed my Lucy, and told her that it was all *her* doing.”

We were most cordially received by my excellent father ; and who should I find with him but that smiling little rogue Ned, whom he had sent for. The boy flew to me before I was aware.—My lord saw my confusion, and made an apology to Sir Robert, by saying, that he should be *his* boy, and never trouble either me or my wife.

“ Aye, but I dare swear, my lord—replied Sir Robert—that she will trouble *him* ; he is too like your son to pass unnoticed by my daughter.”

“ I hope we shall have one still more like him, Sir Robert—said my lord—to call you grandfather.”

“ And who will be *my* grand-papa ?---said the saucy little fellow---*you*, Sir ?” looking up in my father’s face.

“ Aye, boy,” replied he, patting his head.—Then turning to Sir Robert, “ The child is innocent---continued he---and we must make him, if we can, a better man than his father has been.”

“ Faith---said Sir Robert---he will be but too like him ; the wenches will never let such hand-
some

some fellows alone ; so I believe we must e'en take them with all their faults."

While these two old gentlemen were settling so important an affair, I was playing with Ned, who asked me where that pretty lady was who gave him the book and pencil.

"That's *my* daughter, I'll lay half my estate—said Sir Robert.—Well, you must take care of him among you ; and if she brings me as fine a boy, we may think ourselves very well satisfied after all, my lord."

The joy which my dearest creature felt on seeing us return with my father, whom Sir Robert too pressingly invited to dine with him to be refused, is not to be described.—Pray H——n that this *surprize* may be attended with no dangerous consequences.—When I think of the tenderness of her constitution, and the delicacy of her frame, I am every hour alarmed.—To conclude—I am the happiest of men, because I am united to the best of wives.

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